

We Choose Personhood

# THE FEMALE STATE

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The next day the women gathered in a solemn conclave in the meeting hall.

"Our comrade, Gold Flower, still suffers the evil treatment of her husband," said Dark Jade. "Comrade Gold Flower's personal affairs should be taken as the affairs of all of us. Alone, she cannot fight. But with us she can fight all bad husbands. Now, are you ready to struggle?"

"Ready," answered the crowd.

"All right," said Dark Jade, "we shall first try to treat this bad husband by reasoning with him. If this does not succeed, we shall no longer be polite."

The women drew up in ranks like soldiers. Gold Flower went to a near-by room. As her husband was led in, various shouts burst from the crowd.

"We have turned over....You cannot treat us badly or we will beat you to death.... Tell us the truth....No arguments....If you are frank, you will be treated better; if not, there will be no mercy."

Chang stood before the women listening to their unfriendly greetings with a strained air. "Comrade sisters," he said, "there has been some mistake. Do you know why I married that woman? It was so she could serve us and so she could keep alive. Do you know how badly she has treated our family?"

He looked about with an air of injured innocence.

"All right," said a girl, "tell us what she did to your family."

Chang looked from one face to another, and they were all closed against him. He dropped his eyes in embarrassment. "I am not acquainted with women turning over...."

A hiss went up from the crowd.

"Resolutely oppose that bad husband," shouted a girl.

Jack Belden  
China Shakes the World

Contents

Who Is Saying Men Are The Enemy?.....  
Speech Is the Form of Thought.....  
How We Are Lunatized.....  
Pass The Word.....  
Motherhood and the Subordination of  
    Females and Children.....  
Child-Care for the Child.....  
Women in the Soviet Union: A Brief Survey.....  
Women's Magazines and Womanhood, 1969:  
    Part II-Marriage.....  
    Tell A Woman.....  
    Abortion-A Woman's Decision or the Law's.....  
    Within You and Without You.....  
    Poem.....  
    Drawing.....  
    Feminism Undermines.....  
    Tarzan Had Long Hair Too.....  
    Eve's Sex Under God's Law.....  
    Why Can't Men Listen to Women?.....  
    The Plea for Gradualism.....  
    Earth-Mother.....  
    The Protection Hoax.....  
    Self Defense and the Preservation of Females.....  
    Poem.....  
    Violence and Self Defense.....  
    Using Self Defense.....  
    On Health.....  
    On The Production of Women.....  
Friday Night Study Group Excerpts: April 3, 1970...  
  
Two Letters for Women.....  
Poem.....



371 Somerville Avenue, Somerville, Massachusetts, 02143

.....Dana Densmore.....	4
.....Dana Densmore.....	9
.....Lisa Leghorn.....	16
.....Jeanne Lafferty.....	20
.....Hilary Langhorst .....	22
.....Lisa Leghorn.....	26
.....Rochelle.....	30
.....Dana Densmore.....	34
.....Donna Allen.....	42
.....Betsy Warrior.....	43
.....Dana Densmore.....	45
.....Gail Murray.....	58
.....Indra Dean Allen.....	59
.....Lisa Leghorn.....	60
.....Dana Densmore.....	66
.....Hilary Langhorst.....	73
.....Donna Allen.....	86
.....Dana Densmore.....	88
.....Hilary Langhorst.....	91
.....Betsy Warrior.....	94
.....Jeanne Lafferty and Evelyn Clark.....	96
.....Gail Murray.....	98
.....Pat Galligan.....	99
.....Pat Galligan.....	101
.....Delpfine Welch.....	103
.....Barbara Deck.....	105
.....Janet Jones, Nancy Robbins and Holly Odell.....	108
.....Hilary Langhorst.....	111
.....Dawn Warrior.....	116

## WHO IS SAYING MEN ARE THE ENEMY?

The question "Are men the enemy?" has always struck me as a curious one.

If enemies are perceived as that force against which one does battle and against whom (having killed off sufficient numbers) one wins, the concept is obviously inappropriate.

It is clear to me that in its form "I object to your attitude that men are the enemy" the issue is a dishonest one: it is an attempted smear or a defensive counterattack against the force of our analysis (whether delivered by frightened men or frightened women).

It makes it appear that if we do anything but embrace all men, whatever their individual attitude, as our friends and allies, treating them as allies however they treat us, if we so much as speak of men generally as "our oppressors", then it must be that we regard them as "enemies" in the sense of an opponent so all-powerful and implacable that he must be killed in order to be neutralized.

Of course we couldn't kill off all men if we wanted to, but the point is that it isn't necessary and we all know it. It is the situation men and women find themselves in, the structures of society and the attitudes of women, that make it possible for men to oppress.

Given power and privileges, told by society that these are not only legitimate but the essence of his manhood, it is not surprising that a man should accept an oppressor's role. But if women refused to cooperate, and if they demanded changes in the structures, institutions and attitudes of society, then men, whatever their desires, could not and therefore would not oppress women.

An industrialist, seeking to maximize profits, might wish to pay his human labor subsistence wages rather than minimum legal or contract-negotiated wages. But laws, unions, and attitudes of the society about social justice together prevent him from doing so. The same would apply to men's oppression of women. It could become illegal, impossible, and unfashionable. And it will.

The distinction is often made in the female liber-

ation movement between an "enemy" and an "oppressor" The real enemy, I think we all agree, is sexism and male supremacy: a set of attitudes held by men and women and institutionalized in our society ( and in all societies throughout history).

The origin of these attitudes and institutions is immaterial. Whether they were instituted by men acting out of fear of women or by society as a whole for the survival of the species is irrelevant. Whether it was some kind of "plot" or "just the way things evolved" need not concern us. All we care about are the conditions right now, because it is right now that we propose to change. If traditional attitudes are inappropriate or unjust today in our experience, then they must be replaced.

I think we will learn more about the origins of sexism, and what role men will play in the revolution that will destroy it, by watching how men deal with our call for liberation than by setting up a priori categories of enemy and ally.

Men clearly function as oppressors in a sexist society. But it may be just the situation, something they can't help. It may be because women permit and even encourage such oppression. But if that is the case, and men are innocent and well-meaning, then we will see that demonstrated in their response to our rejection of our role as victim and our criticism of the institutions that cast men into the role of oppressor.

They will probably be surprised at first, showing the signs of being forced to think completely new thoughts (e.g., maybe women are just as smart, maybe it's not appropriate for them to live for "their man", etc.). But, given encouragement, education, and demonstrations of how strongly we feel, they will declare themselves our allies.

They will not continue to ridicule us (if indeed they ever did), they will not play dumb and demand that the same thing be explained over and over as if we had never said a word to them, they will not set themselves up as an "enemy". They will show respect for us as persons and for our cause as appropriate and legitimate.

In fact it turns out that men sort themselves out into allies and "enemies".



A man who senses himself to be our "enemy" will say certain things that reveal his attitude. One standard approach of the less subtle school is "Why do you want to kill off all the men?"

This man may be just attempting to smear you or the movement. He may even couch it in pseudo-sympathetic terms such as "I agree with you completely, but why do you want to kill off all the men?" This is to alarm all people standing around and to let you know what sort of image the movement has (or will have when he gets through shooting off his mouth).

Or, he may just be making a bid for attention. You've long since giving up discussing these issues with men out of acute boredom, but he knows that by throwing in something like this he can scare you into defending your image, into protesting that you do not want to kill off all the men. Once his foot is in the door, he can trap you into a long conversation about the merits of the movement and give you a great deal of unsolicited advice about how you should really be proceeding.

But sometimes this statement is made honestly, that is, out of an honest fear. This sort of man reveals his sense of his own enmity just as much as the others. What he means is: "I will fight to the death to maintain my privileges and my power; if you intend to take them away from me you will have to kill me."

Another ploy, a little more subtle, is "Why do you want to get rid of sex?" Again, this may be a smear, a bid for attention, or an honest fear.

When it is an honestly felt fear, what he means is: "I cannot conceive of sex, cannot be sexually interested in a woman, unless I am in a superior-to-inferior, active-to-passive, aggressor-to-victim relationship with her. If you are going to insist that we must approach each other as equals you will have destroyed sex and you might as well demand permanent celibacy."

Such men set themselves up as enemies by their actions and attitudes, but still it is inappropriate for us to conceive of them as such. They are not enemies. They are irrelevant. And they are foolish, because they are going to lose in the end anyway, and they have passed up their chance to be heroes.

If a man with whom we are involved emotionally acts that way, naturally we will leave him, not to punish

him or strike back at him, but because we have important things to do and he is a drag (or worse). But our work is with ourselves, with other women, and with society as a whole, with the established, institutionalized attitudes of society.

It is demoralizing, self-defeating, and ultimately boring to try to convert individual men who are determined to hold on to their power (and a liberal man who grants almost everything but is willing to fight viciously for the last 2% of superiority can be even more dangerous than the man who won't give at all).

And as far as killing the men -- there are so many self-styled enemies that the disposal of the bodies alone would be a national problem, not to mention the problem of "womanning" the slaughter houses when there are so many more interesting things to do in a world women are just discovering. It would be quite impractical.

Fortunately, it is not necessary either to convert or to kill all the would-be oppressors, however ready they appear to be to defend their honor with their lives. A majority can be oppressed by a minority only with the assent of the victim, the belief by the victim that she is inferior, that it is appropriate that she be oppressed.

If the minds of the women are freed from these chains, no man will be able to oppress any woman. No man can, even now, in an individual relationship; all the woman has to do is walk out on him. And ironically enough, that is exactly what would force the men to shape up fastest. Not very many men could tolerate being deserted, especially over a political issue. And all that's needed is for the woman to learn enough respect for herself to be unwilling to live with a man who treats her with contempt.

Men are not our "enemies" and we should refuse to play "enemy" games with them. If they ridicule us or try to smear us or isolate us, we must laugh and walk out. "Winning rounds" with individual men will not bring our final victory closer and cannot change contempt and terror into a generous respect. Challenges by individual women to individual men have always been met the same way: threats, ridicule, smears, repression. These are the prescribed ways for men to defend their "manhood" against "castrating

females".

Only the march of the whole movement can force the deep re-evaluation that will enable such men to adjust to the reality of women as people and learn to deal in an adult way with their fears and insecurities.

Dana Densmore  
February, 1970

"...No genuine social revolution can be accomplished by the male, as the male on top wants the status quo, and all the male on the bottom wants is to be the male on top. The male 'rebel' is a farce; this is the male's 'society,' made by him to satisfy his needs. He's never satisfied, because he's not capable of being satisfied. Ultimately, what the male 'rebel' is rebelling against is being male. The male changes only when forced to do so by technology, when he has no choice, when 'society' reaches the stage where he must change or die. We're at that stage now; if women don't get their asses in gear fast, we may very well all die."

Valerie Solanas  
S.C.U.M. Manifesto



## SPEECH IS THE FORM OF THOUGHT with a new glossary

Sexism is so pervasive in human culture that even the language reflects it.

And not just in superficial elements of vocabulary, the way racism is revealed in the adjective "flesh - colored" (the color of Band-Aids) and sexism in the adjective "manpower" (when both sexes are providing the power in question, and even when it is being provided entirely by women\*).

No, the most basic elements of our grammar are built on it: case in point, the personal pronouns.

In most cases when the pronoun "he" is used, "he or she" is really meant; often it is confusing not to be able to express this. Does the speaker or writer mean just "he" or does he or she really mean either? (The "he or she" in the previous sentence refers to the individual speaker or writer that was the subject of the sentence. But observe my difficulty in this entirely unpremeditated sentence. "He or she", when we are talking about the expression "he or she", is extremely confusing. But to repeat "speaker or writer" would have been oppressively wordy. And "he", which I must confess I wrote first, would have been seized upon instantly by my hawk-eyed sisters in struggle. In this context I can solve the problem by a long explanation about what the sentence really means and how I come to use a confusing construction. In another context I would have been forced into a compromise with awkwardness and inexactitude.)

The lack of a pronoun for "he or she" also forces a distinction in the case of an individual whose sex is not known or when the speaker would prefer not to reveal it.

When members of a group which is 99% women are referred to as "he" it may be startling, but when the group is all women it can be disorienting. However, it is often considered proper form to say "he" if there is even a theoretical possibility that men might be included.

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\*"Menstrual pain accounts for an enormous loss of manpower hours." Erna Wright, Painless Menstrual Periods, Hart Publishing Co., 1968.

The reasoning for this is very similar to our reasoning here: to say "she" would discourage the potential males. They might feel that the activity, profession, etc. was not for them, or that they would be unimportant if they were present, maybe unnoticed amongst all the women.

It is not required to say "he" if there is no possibility, even theoretical, that a male may be present or included, such as in a girls' gym class or a ladies' room. However, the habit is so deeply ingrained that we are often startled, amused, or discomfitted to hear it even then.

I have personally suffered the embarrassment of addressing women in a female liberation karate class I was teaching using the masculine pronoun. They were astonished, outraged. But I wonder if they haven't been caught in such automatic sexism when it was their mouths which happened to be open. One must speak, after all, and we only have one language. What can we do if it's sexist?

It is amusing to watch the contortions into which (other) speakers and writers must twist their statements in order to deal with this intransigency of our language. Besides the ambiguous and often confusing "he"; there is the ungrammatical "they", the bulky "he or she", the reworking of sentences into the passive tense so as to avoid the use of the active subject, and the repetition of the noun to avoid the problematical pronoun.

Entertaining examples are always at hand. One radio commercial, recruiting students for a computer training course, states: "This is a good field for any man or woman who wants to better himself." Now that sounds startling, absurd, with the "him" following the "woman" so closely.

But "him- or herself" was obviously too bulky, and anyway "him- or herself", though correct, has an odd sound: they probably would have been forced to use the ungrammatical but more familiar-sounding "his or herself".

But on the other hand, they didn't want to say "... for any person who wants to better himself" because they realized that women would automatically exclude themselves (or feel excluded) and they wanted women to enroll in their course too.



Sometimes, of course, it is ambiguous whether women are included and this ambiguity is useful because they aren't. Or, women are included if you get technical, but the speaker would rather not emphasize that (if women can do it too, can it be so great?). Or they are included, because otherwise it would be illegal, but maybe if it appears solidly masculine they won't try.

A new set of words, explicitly asexual, could take the teeth out of that sort of discriminatory statement by removing this ambiguity. Things would be addressed to human individuals, where formerly the use of "he" coupled with tradition exerted a chilling effect on the exercise of rights. (It can't be proven to be discriminatory, since after all, "he" does include "she", doesn't it?--but it carries that connotation nonetheless because women know perfectly well that sometimes it doesn't.)

What is the significance of this particular differentiation by sex, anyway? "They" is genderless. And not only does that not cause confusion, it is a lot easier (witness its frequent adoption for the singular).

The first thing that strikes us when we turn our attention to the singular is the three forms: he, she, it. You couldn't prove it, of course, but it has the connotation of a hierarchy. "He", first, at the top. "She", next, under him, midway between him (man) and it (nature). And finally, "it", an inanimate, nonsentient object.

The solution appears to be to follow the "they" form, at least for personal pronouns. Let us be generous and leave "it" if anyone wants it. (If no one does, our asexual personal pronoun will do for that as well.)

I have here a modest proposal for a new glossary of personal pronouns.

Nominative case: she. "She" is appropriate for the "he or she" usage because within the one word it contains both the old "he" and the old "she". It is therefore the perfect universal nominative pronoun.

(I am conscious of the fact that the suggestion of using the formerly feminine pronoun for the new asexual case is a radical one. It would undoubtedly cause

some confusion during the transition period. However, I think that, in this case, that very confusion would be healthy. If nothing else, it would show men how it feels to have one's inclusion uncertain and permit women a hint of what it feels like to live in a world that is theirs.)

Objective case: herm. This includes "her" and "him". (An alternative spelling with the same pronunciation is "hirm". "Herm" is to be preferred, however, as it has the connotation of "hermaphrodite", a word for beings with both male and female sexual organs. This connotation will help smooth the transition period while we get used to the new word.)

Possessive case: heris. This will be used for "hers or his", including both words both in the spelling and in the sound.

In addition to sounding very much like the old words, and being explicitly singular (avoiding the ambiguity that would arise if we merely adopted the word "they" for all uses), these new words are very short, both written and spoken, comparable to the previous words.

Only "heris" is longer than the old word (two syllables instead of one), but in practical speech it will probably sound like one syllable, like our current word "hers" only with the "s" at the end a soft "s" rather than a "z" sound.

The old words will have to be scrapped entirely. If it is necessary for some reason to specify sex, it will have to be done deliberately. All pipe joints and electrical connectors are "it"s, and if it is relevant whether a particular one is male or female, that must be specified as an adjective to the noun.

The point about the old words being scrapped entirely is a crucial one. It is implied in the fact that in one case I have chosen for our new asexual pronoun a word (she) that formerly denoted one of the sexual cases.

There has been some question about this issue. The reaction of a friend to whom I showed this article in its first draft was that it was good to enrich the language by adding new words, but undesirable to take



away precision by retiring the old ones.

I thought a great deal about this issue myself as I was formulating this proposal. But my conclusion was that it is essential to actually replace the sexual pronouns as being so offensive in principle that what usefulness they had could not justify their retention.

I gave the example of male and female electrical connections, for which the pronoun is not differentiated. Let me give a political example now. Suppose racism was so long established that there were different personal pronouns for white and nonwhite. Suppose "he" specified a white person, "se" a black person.

There would be a certain usefulness to this distinction, which would probably be even more useful to blacks, who must constantly talk about whites and distinguish by race, since race affects their lives so much. (To whites who live in a white world, it wouldn't be as necessary; they rarely have occasion to mention blacks at all.)

However, it would not surprise us very much if black people felt bitter that they were considered so different, so alien, as to require a different pronoun. We would not shed tears over the precision that was being lost to the language if the racist word were dropped entirely. And if we did shed such tears, it would be taken as racism (we really want to be able to differentiate clearly that way) masquerading as an effete, precious concern for the language.

No, in that case we would recognize that human suffering and human dignity are far more important than maintaining a discriminatory precision.

While we are at this, nouns will have to be dealt with too. It seems that it is probably useful to maintain adjectives with the meanings "male" and "female" for when the distinction is relevant, but nouns should be desexualized. Perhaps we can take "woman" to mean "man or woman" since it contains both, or perhaps we could learn to use "human", "person", and "people" as our asexual nouns.

The discrimination-by-connotation in the use of "man" for "man or woman" is even more flagrant than in the case of the personal pronouns.

Employment advertisements blare: "We want a man who...." unless of course they want keypunch operators, secretaries, or receptionists.

And then there are the pronouncements "Man is.... [supply various statements about the nature of mankind, some of which you might like to emulate if you thought you were allowed]". The same sort of statements are made in the form "A man.... [what he is or what he may do or should do]. "

If you make a study of statements like these it turns out that with a few exceptions what they actually mean by "man" is the male of the species with the understanding that the female goes along as wife or daughter, similar to the old idea that women didn't need to vote because she had a man to vote for her, and the current idea that a married woman doesn't need credit because she has her husband's.

Sometimes it turns out not to include women at all, as in a statement I once read to the effect that "Man crawled out of the primordial ooze, conquered nature, and then set about conquering the female." This was the prelude to a rather serious article about man the species and how he lived and developed.

I noticed the opening wording, of course, but I think that in general we understand well enough that "man" means "men" that we could read that opening statement and the rest of the article (in which "man" means "men plus their families") without finding it too strikingly absurd.

Unlike the case of the personal pronouns, we do have asexual nouns already (human, person, people), and they are used at times.

But they will have to be used more, even if they sound strange or strained. That is to be expected. The language wasn't constructed around concepts like "person", a word that can include man and woman without differentiation, as if they were the same class of beings. And we don't think of them that way now. That's why it sounds strange.

But just as racists who really don't think black kids are the same species as white kids can be forced to send them off to schools together as if they were the same, sexists (all of us) can be forced to speak as if men and women are the same species, to be referred to without discrimination as a "person".



Androcentric language is first a symptom of sexism, but it also reinforces it and permits abuses such as subtly shutting women out. To the extent that it is a symptom, enforcing these changes will not abolish sexism. But it would raise consciousness and permit women to begin to feel that they are not a different species, not, in fact, a useful afterthought lodged between man and nature.

Dana Densmore  
March 1970

Women are one-half the world, but until a century ago, ..women lived a twilight life, a half life apart, and looked out and saw men as shadows walking. It was a man's world. The laws were men's laws, the government a man's government, the country a man's country. Now women have won the right to higher education and economic independence. The right to become citizens of the state is the next and inevitable consequence of education and work outside the home. We have gone so far; we must go farther. We cannot go back.

M. Carey Thomas, 1908

## HOW WE ARE LUNATIZED

(Note: The verb To Lunatize fulfills the need for a word which means to cast aspersions on one's sanity, to make one feel crazy or doubt the legitimacy of one's position. This word becomes necessary as we begin to see more clearly and attempt to articulate the extent of the psychology that binds us to our oppression. The subtle nature of our oppression is revealed in the fact that we are lunatized; we are treated affectionately, as darling pets to be tolerated and never taken seriously until we begin to effect some change. Then we are dangerous "crazies" (witches) who must be wiped out or somehow not dealt with at all. This word is especially accurate as it pertains to women's oppression, for luna, the Latin word for moon, has been associated with women throughout many cultural myths. Women are said to be governed by the phases of the moon. The goddess Hecate, ruler of witchcraft and sorcery, and Diana the sorceress represented different aspects of the moon. Throughout history, women who have not accepted their given role have been termed witches. Man had to create an alternate, evil myth for women who would not be ruled.)

Perhaps one of our greatest problems as women has been our inability to respect ourselves or the legitimacy of our positions. It's served as one of the strongest forces keeping women in subjugation. The superiority of men is expounded and reinforced in every aspect of our lives. We all believe it so fundamentally that we cringe at the sight of a member of our sex defying the order of nature. She becomes a bitch, Amazon or lesbian in our eyes, obnoxious and revolting for stepping out of the role assigned her. As long as we attempt to assume positions of male authority or individually protest our status as women, we will be degraded in the same way. For we will be freaks, misfits in a man's world that maintains the male-dominated power relations. Only if women as a group assert feminism at every level can there be hope for substantial change.

At the same time it's becoming clear that we can only trust our own inclinations. The backlash has the weight and "evidence" of centuries of patriarchy and the "proof" of all "civilized" cultures that our

protest is crazy. All laws, attitudes, values and traditions have been created by men. We can be sure that they won't encourage us to define or seek our true potential or question the values which so serve their purposes. Yet we know we're on the right track when we see the violent opposition we receive to even the weakest expression of our doubts.

The tactic of dehumanizing and lunatizing the opposition or anyone who questions is an attempt to mask a defensive, superficial and fearful reaction. The reaction comes from terror that the oppressed might rise up and assert the immorality of their oppression. The oppressor's strength would be pulled out from under him. Men have developed entire civilizations based on their fear of woman. Rather than work through their fear in a rational or constructive way, they have chosen two mechanisms to deal with women. First, men must dominate. If they are denied this channel, they refuse to face women altogether. And this is how men react when confronted with the beginning of women's protest. They laugh hysterically. Liberals have learned to make sarcastic cut-downs. Either method is geared toward devaluing the protest. They serve not only to make women question their legitimacy, but also to allow men to continue to feel on top of the situation. Yet if one examines either the laughter or the sarcasm, one finds a great deal of true hysteria. Men have given a superficial response to a situation they can't begin to cope with. Most "strength" and heightened ego they have has been built, strengthened and maintained by the daily gratification they receive from the oppression of women. Even to comment on women's appearance (girl-watching) is to assert a position of authority and to assume that one's approbation is desired. Most men's strength is based on the superficial gratification they receive from the presence of women. For women to deny them the slightest privileges is to threaten their entire definition. For men have defined themselves in terms of those qualities they deny (yet exert over) women. And they have refused any part of those qualities by which they define women. So men respond by laughing, a tactic intended to reduce women to a whimpering state of inarticulateness.

In the past, because most of the protest women voiced was individual and personal, they felt illegi-



timate. They believed not only that their doubts were unfounded but that they were less desirable women for having voiced them. But now women are beginning to continue their protests. On a mass scale, we find the same tactics used against us. Leftist groups debate over the place they should accord the woman's movement in their revolution. Yet we also see the alternative escape being used. Many men, when confronted by women on the street who are unobliging to their comments, requests or rapes, have simply turned and fled!! If for no other reason than men's frenzied reactions we know our assertions are hitting vital weak spots.

Yet we have been lunatized in an even more fundamental way. We haven't believed in the historical or scientific cause of our emotionality. Sexism, having created in us intense emotional poles, has turned and used this phenomenon as further evidence of our biological inferiority. The roots of our boredom as well as our rages and depressions lie in our inability to adjust to a life that refuses to concede our humanity.

Women's boredom with men's activities and concerns has been received with gentility. Men "honor" women's complaints with a nod and a wink amongst themselves. Of course the "little lady" wouldn't be interested in such matters. It's far better that she remain at home and concern herself with her own activities (which for her should prove far more stimulating). But when we investigate why these matters are boring to her, we find clues to the subtle nature of sexism. Boredom can be a reaction to irrelevancy or dogmatism. Men's activities can't help but be irrelevant to women. Women know that nothing men discuss will greatly affect their lives. The only things that would affect women's lives, i.e. changes in the sex roles, will only come about through the efforts of women anyway. Certainly men, who superficially profit so much from the sex roles as they exist, will not choose to discuss or change them. Men's concerns rest with preserving their superior status and proving their importance to the world, if not with directly asserting their desire to be on top. These dogmatic assertions stem from insecurity. Female liberation does not entail simply depriving men of their superficial identities. It asserts the necessity for men and demands the freedom

for women to define themselves in terms of concrete achievements, creativity and humane relations with others. Woman's boredom has assured both men and women of woman's inferior mental capacities. But as we account for our boredom, we will demand that all discussion and change be relevant to us. We will also demand the fulfillment of more humane values and concerns. Personal definitions will be based on individual creativity and contribution rather than dogmatic assertions and gestures symbolic of a superior caste of people.

With no outlet for creative energies or for the resulting rage and confusion, we have often fallen into depressions. In the past we have seen no possibilities of integrating our desires and potentials with the expectations and duties of women. Attempts at personal solutions or escapes have, at best, brought us to situations confronting more sophisticated sexism. But in the future we will learn to interpret these symptoms as confrontations directly or elusively with the narrow possibilities of the past. We will believe in the justification of our exasperation to the point that we fight fundamentally all assertions of male privilege.

Lisa Leghorn  
January, 1970

"BOREDOM: Life in a 'society' made by and for creatures who, when they are not grim and depressing, are utter bores, can only be, when not grim and depressing, an utter bore."

Valerie Solanas  
S.C.U.M. Manifesto



## PASS THE WORD

Many people seem to avoid using the word female out of a sense of propriety, as if it were not quite polite. Some people wince when it is used. It is true that the word female has been used against us in the past by people whose imperfect perceptions told them that to strip away the social trappings that constitute the finished product known as "woman" would be to leave only a weak and sniveling creature, the embodiment of evil, a blot on the face of humanity (men).

Since we disagree with this analysis our acceptance of the term comes from a different starting point. We found that the words male and female had separate origins. (This can be seen in the Latin roots femina and masculus). We used the word female at first for the obvious purpose of differentiating between ourselves and the so-called opposite sex. But we also discovered that female easily becomes an adjective, as in female people, female children, female doctor etc., thereby implying that one's genital arrangement is not necessarily what best describes one at all times. It is more scientific to be able to distinguish between instances when one's femaleness is essential and when it is auxiliary. This is not so easily done with the word woman, although there have been reported attempts made in this direction by people who cling to their blind distrust of so naked a concept as female.

It might be more sensible to question the word woman, which has more social implications and innuendos. It often implies that to fulfill the requirements of one's sex is an achievement rather than a given biological fact. Somewhere in the process of striving for the rewards offered to "good women" we became aware of our humiliating role as men's willing victims, and that to be a woman meant to dress and act the part of a clown. How then could the simple biological designation of female be more embarrassing than the social definition of woman?

It should be borne in mind that it wasn't until a few years after the inception of the civil right movement that Black people discarded the term "Negro" as a suitable definition for themselves. But this rejection, when it came, was a powerful expression of



the radical changes that Blacks had begun to bring about in all aspects of their lives.

It is becoming painfully clear that the word liberation in reference to our movement is rapidly being replaced by a small, enigmatic three letter invention (lib) which makes its way into headlines, articles, leaflets, speeches and into our everyday language. An explanation of this annoying practice is long past due. Those who have thought once about it present this usage in terms of economy and convenience. What is difficult however, is an explanation of why these efficiency experts waited so long to save on the word liberation. Perhaps the National Liberation Front is more easily converted to the NLF, but what about the Black Liberation movement? And certainly Third World Liberation is enough of a mouthful to warrant modification. It would appear that the substitution of lib for liberation is more an attempt at diminution rather than abbreviation, a lessening rather than a shortening. Such was the case with the predominant use of suffragette in place of the traditional (respected) suffragist. It could be that those who favor such reductions feel that it makes the concept easier to swallow. This depends entirely on who is doing the swallowing.

The word liberation signifies to us freedom from oppressive social relations, sexual humiliation, fear and daily outrages and indignities which are our lives. The word liberation, because of its reference to all oppressed peoples, Blacks, Orientals, Third World and Working Class people, constantly relates our movement to these others. It shows lack of respect and seriousness about the Female Movement not to use this word in all its strength and dignity.

Jeanne Lafferty

My wish is to ride the tempest, tame the waves, kill the sharks, I want to drive the enemy away to save our people. I will not resign myself to the usual lot of women who bow their heads and become concubines.

Trieu Thi Trinh  
Vietnamese Women

## "MOTHERHOOD" AND THE SUBORDINATION OF FEMALES AND CHILDREN

Traditionally women have been expected to have sole responsibility for child-raising. Until quite recently a woman could escape the bearing of children only by sexually isolating herself from men (as nuns did), or by submitting to an operation to destroy the fetus or to prevent conception from ever occurring. Contraceptive devices have made it possible for a female to choose whether or not to breed. The unmarried girl and the wife taking the pill feel freer than their mothers did to decide what they want to do. Why is it then that women of all classes still have child after child? With no other alternative of making a living, the majority of women inevitably attempt to find financial support for themselves by producing and caring for a man's children. Marriage may not be an economic necessity for a woman with a decent-paying job, but her status as wife and mother protects her from mistreatment by society (other males) and from some of the loneliness and worthlessness she feels as a female.

The struggle to give a child life is not enough; a woman must give herself up to feeding, clothing and training it. A mother is occupied 24 hours of the day. Whatever part of her mind is not totally absorbed in the process of the child's growth is stunted by the lack of any other companionship or information than that which is given to women-and-children as a unit. Her maternal service is understood to have moral but not economic value; that is, by doing this work, a female does not contribute as a single person to the whole of society - she only contributes to the family in which her personality and the child's are submerged. She obtains her significance by way of her husband, the child's father. A woman on welfare is required to relate to the state in the same way. If a father abandons his child, he is condemned for not providing the money to feed and clothe the child. When a mother leaves her child, she not only is denying it financial support, but "love" - that is, the 24 hour attention that is basic to its survival. (This censure may be escaped if the new-born infant is immediately transferred to the care of a foster-mother.) If she has a



job that takes her out of the home, she must make some arrangement to substitute a friend's, a relative's, or a condescending husband's attention.

Many families depend on the earnings of a working-mother, but, even when essential, her contribution is always in question. Not merely because she earns less than a man, but because she can not be the image of the competent mother. The church, laws, schools and the media reinforce the age-old idea that a woman's life is unnatural and meaningless unless focused upon a man or a child. In either case she exists to provide service. It is inevitable that the frustrations of the unequal male-female relationship, grounded in the contradiction between master and slave, direct a woman to depend on her protective relation to children. A poor woman, who understands very well that she has no "creative control" over her children's lives once they are old enough to walk, can find herself again and again in the new little child. Middle-class women are encouraged to realize themselves in creatively structuring their children's environment; they are taught to involve themselves in choosing styles of behavior, styles of education. These choices (privileges) are contrasted with the obvious control poverty has over the behavior and education of poor children and are made to seem an essential part of being a "good mother". The satisfaction a woman has of making some decisions for her children, disguises the fact that females have no real power to define the conditions of their own and their child's reality; these conditions have been brought about and altered by fathers and husbands.

Every woman struggles with the ambivalent way that society (i.e. men) sees her; men can not love those whom they oppress. The privacy and exclusiveness of the middle-class family keep a woman from so easily understanding that, no matter how well she can manage to arrange for a child, she is subject to the bottomless suspicion men have about the "goodness" of those whose physical and psychic being they have need to exploit. At the same time that certain feminine qualities are extravagantly praised, women are blamed for society's failure to create healthy children.

A child is considered to be derived from two particular people and to have to belong to them unless legally adopted by someone else. Society has declared the vulnerability and weakness of the infant, but the physical protection and consistency of environment that are basic conditions for healthy growth have been established only in private families.

Along with real attention, it is assumed that a child grows psychologically by accepting or rejecting the personal interactions between its parents. Even when this imitating of the mother-father model has obviously damaged and distorted the child's behavior, it is assumed that a better model of parental behavior ought to have been provided. It is not considered that every mother is affected by her secondary nature as female and by her supportive function as wife, nurse, maid, babysitter. It is clear that a child feels oppressed by all the work that is done for it by this one person and by the emotional payment that a mother may ask for her security. Her unequal situation in marriage directly affects the child's feelings toward her. The child is not understood to have a right to demand of society the type of situation and the experience that would insure its health and intelligence.

Within the family, the child is subordinate to the father and the mother. It has no independent status, except as the parents will grant it the possibility to be someone they have not imagined. They have power to determine who and what their child is at any moment. It is inevitable that a child who wants to protest its helplessness must use some form of open rebellion or of secret withdrawal.

This institutionalized dependency of the child keeps it close to the parent most directly concerned with it - its mother. It is approved for a woman to find a new world, an external satisfaction in the growing consciousness of her baby. But because this maternal affection is historically inseparable from the subordination of females to males, and the subordination of children to adults, for the needs of adults, the child is from the very first exploited by that affection, which does not acknowledge it to be an independent person in its own right. It is no accident that women are brutalized by men, and



children by parents. Affection has been used as power and is based on the maintenance of weakness and dependency by any means. When "loving" treatment does not produce obedience, a beating will. It is necessary for women to become autonomous - not to be used and abused by men for their purposes - and not to create or dominate children. Children have protested individually and suffered isolated deprivation; they too have potential collective strength to demand their right to physical and mental health.

Hilary Langhorst

"Men have broad and large chests, and small narrow hips, and are more understanding than women, who have but small and narrow chests, and broad hips, to the end that they should remain at home, sit still, keep house, and bear and bring up children."

Martin Luther

"In personal relationships with both women and blacks, white men generally prefer a less professional and a more human relation, actually a more paternalistic and protective position somewhat in the nature of patron to client in roman times, and like the corresponding strongly paternalistic relation of later feudalism. As in Germany it is said that every gentile has his pet jew, so it is said in the south that every white has his pet black, or in the upper strata, several of them. We sometimes marry the pet women, carrying out the paternalistic scheme. But even if we do not, we tend kindly with her as a client and a ward, not as a competitor and equal..."

Alva Myrdal-in An American Dilemma  
Gunnar Myrdal

## CHILD-CARE FOR THE CHILD

The primary reason that we are concerned with the development of child-care facilities is that we feel there's a desperate necessity for a more humane means of raising children in order to free mothers and children alike. Also, every child must be provided with adequate nutritional, medical and educational facilities. When children are reared privately there is no guarantee that these needs will be met. In this "affluent society" too many children aren't even provided with basic necessities. Most of the opposition that we have received has been concerned that child-care centers would deprive children of the individual attention and love that they so greatly need. Yet although the family ideal may have at one time provided for these needs, it has no longer been able to fulfill this function.

Raising children is the sole occupation of many women. This could be an extremely rewarding and creative occupation if the culture regarded it as such and provided facilities to allow the fulfillment of creative energies. But because women as a group have no choice in the raising of children, it thus becoming "women's work", it has become a degraded occupation. Degradation is inherent when one doesn't have a choice. Even if women were to overcome the psychological barriers involved in making other choices, there are no alternative institutions for the raising of children. Once married, women begin to feel stranded in a situation they have no control over. This culture has made it extremely difficult for women to choose not to bear children, what with unsafe contraception, rigid abortion laws and the loathed image of the unfertile woman. Raising children can't help but become a resented occupation when it involves 24 hour a day responsibility. A great deal of frustration, anger and creative energy with no outlet must be either suppressed or find destructive outlets. Under these conditions of implied hostility the child does not receive much love and affection. Most mothers exert tyrannical authority over their children because it's the only form of authoritative power they are allowed to hold. The child needs individual love and attention. Only in a situation where those around her are free to provide



for these needs, and have chosen to fulfill this function because they love children, will the child receive this love without conflict.

In a family situation one also finds that for the most part the child is submitted to the whims of the one or two parents. If the parents are pre-occupied with other problems, in bad spirits or can't give their time to the child, she will experience it emotionally as a lack of affection or in some cases as outright rejection. This can't help but be a destructive situation. Parents have to be free to place their personal needs first. Yet it's only natural that the child react negatively. The only way that the contradiction can be resolved is if the child is cared for by more people- men and women who have chosen to care for children during a portion of their lives as an occupation that they enjoy and want to learn from while teaching others.

If a child is exposed to more influences than those of her parents, she will remain open to different kinds of life-styles. It is a great deal more humane to provide a child with a greater number of life-styles and moralities from which to choose. Obviously, less possibilities are offered by two parents who have made similar basic choices (or with whom his choice dominates). Parents have made fundamental choices for their children simply by not allowing that other possibilities be available to them. They offer only one or two life-styles with which to identify, rather than a wider choice or the possibility of identifying with a community.

Oppression can be defined not only by the inability of a group of people to make free choices but also by the fact that they are defined by someone other than themselves. In this culture, children as well as women and blacks are not given the opportunity to define themselves. They sense when very young that if they don't accept the definitions of themselves that their parents have given them, that they will not receive the approbation they so greatly need. Children must be presented with a variety of self-definitions from which they can choose freely. In this way, the course of their maturity will be characterized by their efforts toward narrowing many possibilities to those they wish to pursue.

Another argument against child-care centers has been that they would deprive the child of needed continuity in her life. The assumption is, of course, that the continuity provided by her parents is a desirable one. The only continuity they provide is in their life choices. And we see children all the time fighting these choices, attempting to assert other choices, or being hurt by their parents' insistence that these choices must be followed. Parents' presence provides, in a sense, a superficial continuity. Children must be encouraged to establish inner continuity based on a growing establishment of what they want their lives to be. This is only possible if they feel free to do so, knowing that the choice hasn't already been made for them.

One is often astonished by the insight and frankness of very young children. Very often their clear-headedness can provide humane solutions to seemingly complex problems. Children can afford to be open and truthful and give conscientious and constructive thought to all issues for they have not yet made their choices. They are the only group of people who don't have vested interests in maintaining things a certain way or in seeing things occur in preconceived patterns. This becomes clouded because they are pressured to make given choices too early, not having gone through the processes of self-definition. The pressure arises from an intense desire for the approbation of those around them. They sense that to receive approbation from their parents, they must fulfill their parents' expectations of them. Subconsciously they make fundamental choices. If children were instead encouraged to take responsibility for their own decisions, they could maintain an honest and open evaluation of situations confronting them. This could lead to an extraordinary process of maturation producing adults concerned with establishing the truth, providing for the moral and the humane and contributing to the establishment of a culture that meets the needs of all.

It means a great deal to children to be treated "as adults". In a child-care center, children and adults of all ages could learn from each other. They would regard each other as individuals needing varying kinds of attentions rather than as persons with pre-conceived functions or pre-established needs. Children would



have as great a voice in determining their futures as those around them. In this way, feeling personal responsibility for their lives, children would be encouraged in finding the best possible means of integrating their wishes with reality. If this process were encouraged in all humans from such an early age, one can't help but envision the development of an extraordinary civilization.

The idea that children are the future of the couple (of the man) and should be the responsibility of the couple (the woman) rather than the society as a whole serves only men's interests. In the animal kingdom the survival of the species rather than the survival of the individual has been nature's ruling concern. The young are cared for in the most efficient way possible and then leave their "parents" to fend for themselves. In many "primitive" cultures we see the children cared for communally--the responsibility as well as the rewards of child-rearing belonging to the culture as a whole. The importance of the private raising of children lies in the services it performs for the male. The family institution ensures that men aren't responsible for the drudgery involved in raising kids privately. Women take care of that. Yet children (mostly male children, the more important) are the future of the husband--his immortality. That's why they must follow his footsteps--carry on his occupation or concern for him. His sons will carry on the "family" name--his name. And they will inherit the "family" property--mostly his. This insures that man's fear of death can be dealt with. He never really dies as long as his children are perpetuated in his image. We have seen what this security for the male has done for the women and children.

Lisa Leghorn  
February, 1970

"A true community consists of individuals--not mere species members, not couples--respecting each other's individuality and privacy, at the same time interacting with each other mentally and emotionally--free spirits in free relation to each other--and co-operating with each other to achieve common ends. Traditionalists say the basic unit of 'society' is the family; 'hippies' say the tribe; no one says the individual."

Valerie Solanas      S.C.U.M. Manifesto



## WOMEN IN THE SOVIET UNION: A BRIEF SURVEY

... never crying,  
everything on her back  
and everything double--a woman's lot!

N. Panchenko Obeliski

When most westerners think of Russian women, they think either of "unglamorous" Amazons who lay bricks and drive tractors, or of wistful creatures, tentatively tasting the first fruits of Western wickedness--lipstick and miniskirts--and yearning for more. Either image reflects the preconceptions of the almost exclusively male western press corps through whose eyes we see Soviet society.

The reality, of course, is quite different. As in all socialist countries, women have been freed from constant preoccupation with maternity and child care by free health care, including abortions, day care centers, and paid maternity leaves. But this alone, is not enough.

Women must play a free and equal part in the productive labor of a society. There must be an end to the oppressive dominance of woman by man.

Communist ideology has always strongly emphasized the importance of this. "The social progress of any country can be measured by the condition of its women", said Marx. And his words were echoed by Lenin in his pamphlet "Women and Society": "The proletariat cannot achieve complete freedom, unless it achieves complete freedom for women."

Thus, for women, the Russian Revolution (which began on International Women's Day) was a double revolution, for it opened up the possibility of a radical change in their status, a real attempt to achieve full equality.

Right after the Bolshevik Revolution, a sweeping attack on all aspects of inequality was made. The patriarchal family structure was a main target. Laws decreed equal employment rights for women, and the needs of pregnant women, and women with many children were provided for. Legal abortion became a reality in 1920. And the government sought to shift primary re-

sponsibility for child care and domestic chores from the individual woman to communal facilities. Experiments with communal dining were common.

In the 1930's, under Stalin, some of these gains were wiped away. There was new emphasis on the family --part of the general paternalism of the Stalin era. A government decree in 1936 made abortions illegal, and tightened up requirements for both marriage and divorce. The Family Law of 1944 continued the move in this direction, by giving legal sanction only to registered marriages, outlawing paternity suits (marking a revival of the notion of illegitimacy), making divorce subject to costly and complicated judicial procedures, glorifying motherhood (the Hero Mothers), and taxing all unmarried persons of childbearing age, or married people with small families.

In the post-Stalin period, there has been some improvement. Soon after Khrushchev took power, abortions were legalized again, and the tax on unmarrieds and parents of small families was abolished. In 1968, divorce procedures for childless couples were immensely simplified, though they remain complex for couples with children.

But law is only part of the picture. Since the Revolution, women have participated in almost every important sector of Soviet life. Today 73% of all doctors, 60% of all economists and statisticians, 67% of all teachers and 30% of all engineers are women. Soviet women make up 56% of all agricultural workers and 48% of all non-agricultural workers.

Still, problems remain. Most positions of leadership are held by men. The prestige professions--physics, surgery, college teaching, the upper echelons of the party--are male-dominated. The patriarchal family structure remains. Although in most families, both the mother and father work, household chores are still considered the responsibility of the woman. And these chores take a far greater amount of time than they do in the West, for Russian women don't have access to supermarkets or the vast range of household conveniences developed to pacify the American housewife.

Child rearing is also considered a primarily female task. Day care centers are staffed almost exclusively by women. And there have even been articles suggesting that women ought to be paid to be mothers--to stay home



and raise children as a means of combatting the low Soviet birth rate. V. Perevedintsev, writing in the Literaturnaya Gazeta, the newspaper of the Soviet Writer's Union, provoked a storm of debate over such a suggestion.

Many women wrote in to protest. This excerpt from a letter by C. Berezovskaya, a lawyer, criticizes the dual role that Soviet women are supposed to play. Instead of removing women from the labor force, why not probe other alternatives, she asks:

why leave out such a perfectly realistic, just solution, one requiring no additional state expenditure, and providing an outlet for reserve labor, as having men take upon themselves half the household duties now considered woman's work? Perhaps then, these chores will stop being so overwhelming. Life today is sufficiently mechanized that, given the division of labor in half, it wouldn't be that difficult to handle. And the psychological feeling of humiliation and second-rateness so common to women would no longer be there. Why so lightly dismiss this option in all the discussion about the participation of women in the life of our society?

With the ratio between men and women becoming more equal (in 1959, there were 20 million more women than men in the Soviet Union--the result of enormous World War II losses), it is clear that there will be further attacks on the position of women in Soviet society. It is also clear that Soviet women will not give up their productive role without a fight. This is evident from the angry response to the Perevedintsev article.

What, then, is the situation of Soviet women over 50 years after the Revolution? Although the gap between ideology and reality is great, there is no question but that the Russians are better off than their American counterparts. The fact that most work means that they are not caught in the bind of the traditional American housewife, not forced to identify themselves solely as Mother. Nor are they like American single girls, for they do not define themselves in terms of some present or future dream man. The Soviet women I met had a sense of themselves rare in American women.



Many were living separately from their husbands in order to pursue their careers. Others challenged traditional notions of the family by having children out of wedlock and raising them themselves.

The women bricklayers in the Soviet Union then, are hardly symbols of oppression. The real oppression lies in the stereotype of woman as weak and helpless, unfit for hard work (unless she is poor or black), and it is against this that women everywhere must fight.

Rochelle

A peculiar condition of women is that their environment has been almost wholly that of the home; and the home is the most ancient of human institutions; the most unalterably settled in its ideals and convictions; the slowest and last to move...The world of science and invention may change; art, religion, government may change; industry, commerce and manufacturing may change; but women and the home are supposed to remain as they are, forever...The economic position of women in the world heretofore has been that of the domestic servant...Domestic service is the lowest grade of labor remaining extant. It belongs to an earlier social era...It is a low position in this mighty world so complex and stirring, so full of noble activities, to earn no higher place than was open to the slave of countless centuries ago, but it is a far lower position to be fed and clothed as a sex-dependent, a creature without economic usefulness. This economic dependence is the underlying ground of the helplessness of women...No human creatures can be free whose bread is in other hands than theirs.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman  
Economic Basis of the Woman Question, 1898

Part II--Marriage

The women's magazines are full of advice on how a woman can be successful as a woman. This means as a wife, as a mother, as a cook, as a seamstress, as an attractive female.

Perhaps the most important concern to the reader is her marriage, and almost as many articles are devoted to telling her how to save or improve her marriage and keep her man interested and at home as are devoted to recipes.

The quantity alone of this advice says something about the political situation men and women find themselves in. There is no comparable volume of literature instructing men in how to hold on to their wives, how to protect their wives' egos, how to remain sexually attractive, how to remain interesting.

It is not regarded, for instance, as a disaster if the husband arrives home from work tired and grumpy, but rather a sign of how hard he has worked for his wife. She, grateful, must rush to soothe him, fix him a drink, help him relax, and feed him, hopefully protecting him from screaming kids as well as all other problems until he is refreshed.

The wife, however, is warned never to greet her husband at the end of the day tired and grumpy, however bad her day has been. Husbands are bored with wives' trivial daily problems and are annoyed to have them imposed on them.

But after all, why should she protect him from screaming kids? It is she who has been locked up with them all day!

It turns out that a wife's duty is not just to run the house, cook, clean, bear and care for the children, and make the home a cozy haven for the man, but to build up his ego.

"YOUR HAPPINESS AND YOUR HUSBAND'S EGO"

An article by James Lincoln Collier in Woman's Day in October 1969, entitled "Your Happiness and Your Husband's Ego" discusses this. Its title alone says it all, and the implications are appalling. You can not be happy unless your husband's ego is puffed up,



according to the glib logic of the author, so if it comes to a clash between your ego and his, yours must be sacrificed because that is the only way you can be happy.

This article was reprinted in Reader's Digest in January 1970 under the even less subtle title, "How to Support Your Husband's Ego"

One would think that men would be embarrassed to see those words in big letters on the flyer glued to the cover, staring out from all the newsstands. This casual acceptance of the should-be-insulting idea that men's egos are such weak, fragile, pathetic things they have to be supported! The admission that they would fall apart without the artificial aid of wives following explicit rules from the magazines! And women believe that it is true, too, as documented in an amazing article in Redbook magazine, in April, 1968, called "Why Wives Lie to their Husbands".

"Your Happiness and Your Husband's Ego" begins with the story of a woman who went back to work with her husband's approval. Their marriage subsequently began to deteriorate rapidly. He became irritable and refused to lift a finger to help her. He was suffering, according to the marriage counsellor, from a "severely damaged male ego".

Even though he had agreed intellectually to his wife's return to work, he couldn't accept it emotionally. Fortunately, according to the author, Janet was able to recognize and correct the situation in time. "Correct" here apparently means quitting her job.

But it turns out even the husbands of stay-at-home wives have ego problems. It is a tough world they work in out there ("today's complex and competitive society") and "the average man is subject to continuous assaults upon his masculinity." Then comes an amazing statement. "Wives have their ego problems too, but many authorities believe that the male's is far more vulnerable." We needn't bother to inquire into the sex of those authorities. The author continues: "In our society men set out every morning to walk a tightrope over an abyss of failure."

The responsibility is placed on the nature of society, and the implication is that it is a natural misfortune like droughts and floods. It isn't.

In the first place, this society the author speaks



of is a male society, and the competition a male culture ethic, so that it is fair to say that men are setting up these impossible standards for themselves. Second, it isn't nearly as bad as he describes, and he exaggerates the suffering of the men in it: if it were that bad it would be changed. On the whole, however, men accept it. Sometimes they get ulcers, true, but they also have the challenge and the exhilaration of it and the rewards of success, material and status. If the game weren't worth it, they would change the rules.

Third, the individual really defines failure, and the "assaults on his masculinity" are his inability to be as successful as he would like to be. Why shouldn't he change his attitude, instead of women changing theirs and sacrificing themselves? Why should the woman in the opening story have to quit her job? Why isn't the advice given that the man is neurotic, unable to adjust to reality, his development arrested in a childish state where "mother" exists only for him and he is jealous and sulks if she has any other interests? Why isn't the man sent for treatment?

In the case of "Your Happiness and Your Husband's Ego" it was pretended (by the writer, a "happily married" male free-lance writer), that Janet quitting her job was a very simple and mutually acceptable solution to the problem. But this ignores any factors which must have existed to make her go back to work in the first place.

She may have been bored or oppressed at home, she may have needed challenge, a sense of identity larger than that afforded through her "family", something that was meaningful in the society at large. She may have wanted financial independence, or at least an end to the suffocating feeling of having to beg for every penny from her husband and to feel guilty if she spends too much...even on the house (for which, as Ellen Willis points out, she is merely a purchasing agent) or on her appearance (which, again, is not mere vanity but part of her job as a female and essential (she has been taught by these same magazines) if she wants to hold on to her husband).

But Mr. Collier, viewing marriage serenely from an exclusively male point of view, does not even mention

these possible feelings on Janet's part. It was just taken for granted that if Tom didn't want her working, even subconsciously, below his rational level, even neurotically, then rather than him dealing with his selfish, egocentric, childish impulses, it was entirely appropriate for Janet to make the sacrifice. You can't be happy unless your husband is, Collier says (convenient that the husband's feelings come first in this construction), but he doesn't deal with the problem that if too much is sacrificed to the husband, the wife may be condemned to unhappiness because of what she's given up, however sweet the husband may act to her once she has gone back to being the agreeable, self-sacrificing stay-at-home wife he wanted.

Collier pretends he has a solution by ignoring the needs, feelings, personality, will and soul of the wife. Other articles, however are sometimes directed specifically at wives' problems and at least discuss them. They don't do as convincing a job of presenting "solutions."

Marriage advice from women's magazines is most notable for its barrenness. These articles frequently gain the reader's initial interest by admitting that there is a problem (or rather, referring to a problem the reader is already familiar with) then proceeding to discuss it at length without offering any solutions.

It is surprising in fact that they can continue to apply the same barren tools of analysis to the problems in article after article without finding a solution. When will they learn that a new approach, a new analysis is necessary?

One concept taken for granted, at least on the magazine covers where it will tempt women to buy the magazine in search of realistic advice instead of rosy platitudes, is the concept of the "trapped" housewife. The extent to which this is taken for granted was illustrated one month when Reader's Digest advertized "Occupation Housewife: Trap or Opportunity?", Family Circle advertized "How to Escape that Trapped Feeling" and Redbook advertized "A Young Mother's Story: Why I Like Feeling Trapped."

#### "HOW TO ESCAPE THAT TRAPPED FEELING"

The August 1969 issue of Family Circle advertizes



on the cover "How to Escape that Trapped Feeling." It is excerpted from the book "How to Stay Married" by Norman M. Lobsenz and Clark W. Blackburn. Mr. Blackburn is general director of Family Service Association of America.

The authors begin by admitting that the "trapped" feeling is very real for many wives. Many women, they say, are separated from friends and family, tied down with young children, overwhelmed by the duties of wife and mother and isolated from the outside adult world, often without a car and far from mass transportation, with husbands who are often away on business or working late at night.

The authors go on: "Many of today's wives grew up thinking they would combine marriage with other accomplishments. But children are more demanding than had been expected, life in the suburbs is less rewarding, and marriage is not quite so egalitarian as had been anticipated. Life suddenly becomes sterile.... The role of wife and mother may be glorified officially, but it is not all that exalting for a woman who has prepared herself for something more or has experienced satisfactions outside of home life. Today's young woman is encouraged to be competitive and independent, to use her mind and strive for achievement. Yet when she marries this same girl is expected to unlearn much of this and become a well-adjusted, non-competitive housewife and mother who derives her principal pleasures from these roles. Many women find this reversal difficult. They protest that their minds are atrophying, that they did not need a college education to scrub floors, wash dishes, change diapers, leave notes for the milkman, pay the newsboy, and chit-chat with the neighbors. There is a yearning for something more--and a guilt over not being fulfilled. I ought to be happy, they say. What's wrong with me that I'm not?"

So far he has drawn a picture all the trapped housewives can identify with. Now that we're hooked (Finally! Someone who really understands!) the authors proceed to discuss the solutions. They begin by saying we should admit this dissatisfaction without feeling guilty, so we will be freer to "explore other interests", rather than letting the disillusionment and guilt be "projected" (their word) "into jealousy



of the husband's freedom, his chance to move ahead while they are stuck in a rut."

Other interests--what do they mean by that? We find out. Civic activities to "help relieve feelings of 'uselessness'." A bookrack over the sink so you can read while doing dishes. Play classical records while you do your housework, thus giving yourself a first-rate musical education. Sell herbs you raise in your garden.

There is no mention of a meaningful life-plan, let alone a career; no suggestion of any kind of activity that demands commitment.

After pointing out the things we could be doing if we looked around, they continue: "Another fact many 'trapped wives' blind themselves to is that their husbands are not having a marvelous time during the day." They quote a male executive of the Family Service Agency on how wives don't understand how hard it is for a man to go to work every day, and what kind of competition they're up against. Then they say (this is the punch line) "Paradoxically, women who have worked seem to be even less understanding of the strains on men."

Paradoxically indeed! So, is this all a joke? No, as a matter of fact they are perfectly serious. We are supposed to swallow that it is a paradox. They proceed to justify the statement by quoting from another counselor: "'For the most part, these women worked for a few years at a pleasant and not very demanding job that was a stopgap. Advancement was not an important issue.'" Stopgap, dead-end jobs, however, are very rarely pleasant, and no pressure-no advancement means there was no challenge. It's challenge and the rewards of recognition and advancement that make careers exciting and rewarding. Any woman who worked at a stopgap dead-end job and is more bored at home would be even more dissatisfied if she had worked at a challenging career about which she really cared, in a field that caught her interest or imagination, where she made a difference and was appreciated for her unique abilities.

Lobsenz and Blackburn then suggest that there be more communication between husbands and wives. This is the standard advice. It makes it a personal problem rather than a social one. Wives should discuss

"their problem" with their husbands, and the husbands should be "understanding." The husbands should notice details about her housekeeping and praise her for it. "This automatically makes a wife's routine tasks and small triumphs more interesting to her."

He can talk to her about his co-workers and his work. ("The wife of a scientist complained that when they were first married she worked closely with him on his doctoral thesis but that 'he acts now as if I don't know a test tube from a Bunsen burner.'")

Finally, the husband can "take a hard look into why he is pouring himself so intensively into his work" and consider whether he needs to work late and weekends so often or take so many trips. If he's not really enjoying it, he should consider whether he might spend some of that time at home.

In short, although the article was called "How to Escape that Trapped Feeling", and although the authors pretend to be offering solutions, the woman is left with nothing. Her failure is her own fault, either her personal laziness and lack of imagination (she didn't build the bookrack over the sink) or her personal misfortune in not having a more "understanding" husband.

Faced with all this wasted talent, all this suffering and frustration, all these crippled lives, the best the authors can suggest is that wives ask their husbands to be more "understanding" of their own adjustment problem.

The possibility that the family structure itself is oppressive, that to expect women to live such lives is monstrous, is never considered. The rightness of it is taken for granted.

And women despair, because even knowing the worst of it (as these men seem to) the experts can only suggest a bookrack over the sink. If that is the case, then it really must be hopeless.

#### "HOW TO MAKE YOUR HUSBAND FIGHT FAIR"

Another example of the technique of gaining the reader's interest (and selling the magazine) by advertising something in the way of a new, honest analysis which takes into account the realities of sexual politics was offered by Ladies Home Journal in October 1968.

Its cover promised, "How to Make Your Husband Fight



Fair". I felt a wave of excitement when I saw it. At last! I thought, as I'm sure many other women did. An article about the special things men do, the unfair ways of fighting that husbands use against wives: the intellectual intimidation, the implied physical threats that cut off discussion, the implied or explicit threat of desertion that wives are so much more intimidated by.

Maybe even, on a deeper, more subtle level, the article would include a discussion of the different self-imposed limits; there are many things that a woman will never say to a man, no matter how angry or how desperate, things that she knows would never be forgiven and would drive him into a violent rage. But men will say almost anything to a woman and she lives with it, just as she lives with being humiliated in public or at parties in ways that it would be unthinkable for a woman to humiliate a man. (It's called "castrating" the man; the woman has been "put down" or "shut up" or "put in her place" or "joked about" or "criticized" or "corrected" or "teased.") Often the blame falls entirely on the woman when she is humiliated. She was talking too much, acting like a know-it-all, whatever.

But inside it turned out the article had nothing to do with how to make your husband fight fair. It was about how husbands and wives, and since it was a woman's magazine and so presumably it was women who were reading the article, how wives should fight fair, specifically by "leveling" with each other about what is bugging them, instead of fighting about substitute issues.

It was a fairly interesting article, but because of the fact that it took the political status quo for granted and worked within that the result was at best a reduction in misunderstandings, the sort of misunderstandings that resulted in Janet and Tom fighting about everything but the fact that he felt castrated by her going back to work with the resulting almost-breakup of their marriage.

If they had studied this article (actually an excerpt from a book) Tom would have been able to explain what was bugging him instead of sulking and picking on her about little things and then Janet could have quit her job right away and saved the whole



family much tension.

In other cases it is conceivable that it could be dangerous for a wife to "level" with her husband. Unless he can be depended upon to always fight completely fair (and how many can be depended upon when they regard any infringements on their privileges as castration?) any information about where her soft underbelly lies could later be used against her.

The authors of this article meant well, and they had some good insights, but as long as the political status quo is accepted as just and appropriate we can never achieve truly honest, creative, meaningful relations between men and women: we can never even have mutually respectful and loving relationships.

Dana Densmore  
January, 1970

You have heard that old joke -- the three fastest forms of communication known to man are: telephone, telegraph and tell a woman. Ha. Ha.

Well, it's no joke. That's exactly how we'll get the word around. With our millions, we can out-mass the mass media.

Since every woman has the evidence already (in her daily life), she only needs to know that other women are finally on the move to take equality for themselves. The men who kept us isolated and neutralized by name-calling (manhater, bitch, un-feminine, lesbian, etc. etc.) whenever we complained of their unequal treatment, lose their power when we laugh at that trick. And we can laugh when we know so many others are laughing at it, too.

Yes, tell a woman. She'll know what you're talking about, and she'll tell another woman. The message is simple: we are no longer alone.

Donna Allen  
March 1970

## ABORTION - A WOMAN'S DECISION OR THE LAW'S

The abortion laws disregard the fact that they are dealing with responsible human beings, that are supposed to no longer be chattels, but accorded the dignity of the law. As mature human beings, women should have the right to decide for themselves whether or not they should terminate a specific pregnancy. Women already have this responsibility, but are forced to carry it out illegally, if considered necessary. This right should be theirs legally.

There are already laws covering operations in general (a person under 21 needs consent, etc.) and these provide more than adequate coverage in the instances of abortion. Mature legal considerations should indicate to legislators, not liberalization of existing abortion laws, but the complete abolition of such laws.

Each woman must decide for herself. No law is going to force anyone to have an abortion, but those who don't want an abortion should not be allowed to force their decision on others.

As the law now stands, it serves to discriminate against the poor and non-white woman. For example, 90% of the legal therapeutic abortions performed in hospitals in New York in the last twenty years were performed on white women, while criminal abortions accounted for a disproportionately higher number of deaths among the underprivileged. This goes to prove the important point of how the law reflects whose interests are of primary importance, how these interests are furthered and protected by the law. That laws serve only men and the well-off is abundantly clear.

It is equally clear that women get abortions whether they are legal or not. The law just makes more women get criminal rather than legal abortions, and many women die at the hands of untrained abortionists. 10,000 to 18,000 legal abortions are performed in hospitals every year. But 20 to 30 times that many are performed illegally. If these laws are supposed to be humanitarian, and one of the considerations taken into account when deciding for a legal abortion is if the woman's life will be in danger without one, then the fact that a woman's life will be endangered in the hands of an illegal abortionist doesn't keep hospitals from turning women

away.

When the question of abortion arises, the public looks to the professions of religion, law and medicine to supply them with, or to impose their answers on them. This is a completely unrealistic attitude. Women are the only ones truly concerned with abortion; for us it can be a matter of life or death, physical and psychological suffering, and slavery to laws we had no choice in making. True, doctors can be punished for performing "illegal" abortions, but the penalty for women can be death.

Taking a closer look at these professional authorities, we might ask how they can represent women, and how good their moral judgement is. Doctors certainly don't even have equal representation of women in their ranks, and as a group they are noted for their self-centeredness; the same can be said even more vehemently about law-makers.

The hierarchy of the church has never been characterized as having a compassionate view of women; it is also completely dominated by males. The church speaks of the sanctity of life after its long history of crusades, inquisitions, pogroms, genocide and witch burnings. A more recent occurrence in history which can testify to their moral veracity was the discovery of anaesthetics. In that situation the position of the church was that women were supposed to suffer in childbirth to atone for the sins of Eve, and to relieve the suffering of childbirth with anaesthesia was to disobey a biblical injunction. The view that women are innately evil and must be punished for their sins - how does this affect the church's stance on abortion? All these things are part of the political history of women. We want freedom of choice, right now!!!

Betsy Warrior

"Were our state a pure democracy, there would still be excluded from our deliberations...women, who, to prevent depravation of morals and ambiguity of issues, should not mix promiscuously in gatherings of men."

Thomas Jefferson



## WITHOUT YOU AND WITHIN YOU

We human beings are not creatures who spring from the earth, our integrity round and tight, our will free and objective. We are not only influenced by what goes on around us, we are conditioned and created by it.

Desires and even needs can be created. We are all familiar with the ingenious techniques of Madison Avenue to generate insecurity in order to offer their product or service as a means of assuaging the insecurity. The most effective techniques zero in on our fears of not being socially acceptable, not being loved, not being sexually attractive.

The seeds of this insecurity exist already in a society whose ideology of individualism isolates people and throws the blame for all maladjustment and failure onto the individual.

We constantly hear the variations on this theme. It is used to avoid admitting that anything could be wrong with the way our society is set up. "If you can't make a satisfactory adjustment to life, it's your own problem: perhaps some professional help is in order." "Don't try to change the world--you'd better free your mind instead."

And we hear it thrown at us in response to the threat of female liberation. "You should be intimidated by being put down by men." "Leave your family if it's so oppressive." "If you don't like the way your lover treats you, you can get out of bed." "It's your own fault if you don't get good jobs--you let yourself be discouraged, you took the unchallenging, 'feminine' courses of study in school."

The assumption implicit in all these things is the individualist ideology that if you are unable to do something which is theoretically possible (or which is thought to be theoretically possible) it is because of a personal hang-up and consequently you have no legitimate gripe.

This isolates people and tends to make them insecure and unself-confident. They often can be brought to despise themselves because they see in themselves so many supposed weaknesses and psychological problems that prevent them from being happy, well-adjusted, and effective. This is a character-

istic of our society and isolates all of us, not just the women. (However, women, being the most oppressed, are forced to blame themselves the most for their impotence and thus despise themselves the most and are most isolated and afraid and anxious that no one will love them.)

The very isolation the individualist ideology imposes makes us desire even more to be loved and accepted, and fear even more being unlovable

But we cannot escape our fears of being unlovable "Who would want me?" we ask. "I have all these hang-ups."

A man knows he's not a "real man". He can't adjust to his role, either: he's afraid of women. As real people with free will capable of challenging his right to rule (and thus his virility), they are threatening, castrating.

A woman may know she's unwomanly, neurotic and selfish: sometimes she feels trapped and hates her family.

The solution offered to all this is often to open yourself up until you can merge selflessly with another person. In many cases it is explicitly sex. But the solutions all point to sex one way or another. Sex becomes magic, assumes a life of its own, making anything interesting, everything worthwhile. It's for this that we spend these hours trying on micro-dresses, loading up with jingle jangle chains, smoothing on lacy white stockings and Instant Glow Face Gleamer.

It is this that many girls who would be most free to fight in the female liberation struggle are squandering valuable energy pursuing as an indispensable part of their lives. They lavish and dissipate their valuable time and talents and emotional strength on attempts to be attractive to men and to work things out with lovers so that "love" might be less degrading. And too often all they reap is demoralization, damaged egos, emotional exhaustion.

Under the banner of "not denying our sexuality", and pointing to repression in the past when women were denied the right to any pleasure in their bodies at all, many of us now embrace sexuality and its expression completely uncritically. As if present excess could make up for past deprivation. As if even total



sexual fulfillment would change anything. Except... is this true?--except private dead-of-the-night fears that maybe we really are the sexually frustrated neurotic freaks our detractors accuse us of being. Are we chasing sexual fulfillment so earnestly because we have to prove that our politics are not just a result of our needing a good fuck?

Then there is the issue of orgasms. Among those who were never well-adjusted and womanly enough to psych themselves into an orgasm while being vaginally stimulated by a man, there are some who, when they discover that their shame and misery was not only not unique but in fact extremely common and due to very straight-forward anatomical causes, react to this discovery by feeling that they must make it all up by demanding all the physical fulfillment they had been providing the men all along and missing themselves.

What we lost wasn't just X many instances of physical pleasure. The suffering that countless women have endured because they were told that if they didn't have vaginal orgasms they were frigid--that they were neurotic and selfish and unwomanly and sexually mal-adjusted and unable to let go and give and secretly resented the power of their husbands and envied men--this suffering is staggering and heartbreaking.

The best analysis and rebuttal of this evil fraud, this crippling delusion that routinely sacrifices the happiness of one sex to the vanity of the other, is Anne Koedt's article "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm." Every woman should read Anne's paper over and over until that vicious, pervasive ideology of oppression is purged forever.

The liberation of sexual equality and the right to sexual pleasure is the solution for the future. But is there any solution for the past? Is it a solution to go out and collect orgasms in order to make up for all those frustrated, self-loathing years?

I say you can never make up for all that suffering, and certainly not through a mere physical sensation. And as for the psychological rewards of getting my due at last, I can feel no triumph in that, especially when I'm still fighting the old habits and old guilts that remain long after the intellect and the will have plunged on.

The worst part about it is that even with perfect



sexual fulfillment, mutual guilt-free pleasure, we are still oppressed. After all, some women managed to have vaginal orgasm all along, and they were still oppressed; in fact, that was how you were supposed to achieve orgasms, by surrendering completely to the man's will, by loving being a woman and everything that implied.

Sexual relations in the world today (and perhaps in all past ages) are oppressive. The fact that your lover gives you an orgasm changes only one small part of that oppression (namely the part that dictated that you had to see yourself as a creature who was allowed only the muted, sensuous, semi-masochistic pleasure of getting fucked and never the direct active transcendent pleasure of orgasm).

If that were the only injustice, or even the major injustice, done us, we would be very well off indeed. In fact, we would probably be able to bear it without concern, certainly without misery and self-loathing. It's the general oppression and degradation we suffer in the world that causes us to be humiliated in the sex act, as Simone de Beauvoir points out. If it weren't for the sense of inadequacy and impotency we learn from all other aspects of our lives, we would kick our lover out of bed if he was arrogant, inconsiderate, or ungentle.

Some men do the dinner dishes every night. That doesn't make their wives free. On the contrary, it's just one more thing she has to feel grateful to him for. He, in the power and glory of his maleness, condescended to do something for her. It will never mean more than that until the basic power relations are changed.

As long as men are the superior caste and hold the political power in the class relationship between men and women, it will be a favor your lover is doing you, however imperiously you demand it. And beyond that one thing, nothing else need have changed.

But the issue isn't just orgasm. We weren't even allowed to engage in sexual intercourse without giving up social dignity and the respect of men. We weren't allowed to love, to make love, to enjoy making love, even with our husbands. Husbands were commanded to love their wives, wives to obey their husbands. It was cruel and insufferably hypocritical.

But whatever we were denied in the past, it cannot be argued that access to sexual pleasure is denied to us now. Our "right" to enjoy our own bodies has not only been bestowed upon us. It is almost a duty. In fact, things have been turned around to the point where the "fact" (actually a smear devise) that we do not engage in sex is whispered about and used by men to discourage "their" women from having anything to do with us. This is one development that makes me laugh out loud whenever I think about it. What would "Ask Beth" think about that! How can men pull this off with a straight face? They must be terrified indeed at the thought of losing their power to define what is proper for proper women. (For that power is exactly what we are challenging.)

The right that is a duty. Sexual freedom that includes no freedom to decline sex, to decline to be defined at every turn by sex. Sex becomes a religion, existing independently of the individuals who share its particular physical consummation. The media totally bombard us with it.

Sex is everywhere. It's forced down our throats. It's the great sop that keeps us in our place. The big lift that makes our dreary worlds interesting. Everywhere we are sexual objects, and our own enjoyment just enhances our attractiveness. We are wanton. We wear miniskirts and see-through tops. We're sexy. We're free. We run around and hop into bed whenever we please.

This is the self-image we have built up in us by advertising and the media. It's self-fulfilling. And very profitable. It keeps us in our place and feeling lucky about it (the freedom to consume, consume, consume, until we swallow the world). It makes us look as if we're free and active (actively, freely, we solicit sex from men).

And people seem to believe that sexual freedom (even when it is only the freedom to actively offer oneself as a willing object) is freedom. When men say to us, "But aren't you already liberated?", what they mean is, "We said it was okay for you to let us fuck you, that guilt was neurotic, that chaste makes waste; you're already practically giving it away on the street, what more do you want or could you stomach?"

The unarticulated assumption behind this misunder-



standing is that women are purely sexual beings, bodies and sensuality, fucking machines. Therefore freedom for women could only mean sexual freedom.

Spiritual freedom, intellectual freedom, freedom from invasions of privacy and the insults of degrading stereotypes, these are appropriate only to men, who care about such things and could appreciate them. Woman, remember, is a sexual being, soft, emotional, expressive, giving, close to the earth, physical, imprisoned by the frightening disgusting delicious all too perishable flesh. For such a creature to presume upon the territory of transcendence is horrifying, unthinkable, polluting the high, pure realms of the will and spirit, where we rise above the flesh.

Unfortunately, the oppressed often adopt the psychoses of the ruling class, transformed, sometimes, until they seem no longer vicious and intellectually dishonest projections but a reasonable acceptance of reality (and for the oppressed, reality is in a sense what the ruling class believes).

So we recognize that we have something of an intellect, and perhaps even use it openly with tolerant or sophisticated men. But we still recognize that insofar as we are also women, we are soft, emotional, expressive, giving, close to the earth, ruled at times by our sensuality, our profound, undeniable sexuality.

There are rewards for us in this. In losing ourselves in sexual surrender we bring that masterful, rational, hard, unemotional analytical man to abject, total, frenzied need of the flesh he likes to fancy himself above. And there is no question that sexual love for a woman contains as a strong component the desire to become powerful by merging with the powerful. She sees herself as impotent and ineffectual, him as masterful and competent. She longs for that sense of competence and the confidence that comes to him from knowing it's "his world". In the intimacy and ecstasy of sex she seeks to lose herself, become one with him.

Children who are told over and over that they are liars or thieves become liars or thieves. People who are told over and over that they are crazy become crazy. If you are told over and over that you are a being who has profound sexual needs the odds are very good that you will discover that you do. Particularly

when other outlets are forbidden or discouraged. Particularly when it is emphasized that those who do not feel these needs are frigid, neurotic, sexually maladjusted (which for a woman means essentially maladjusted), dried up, barren, to be pitied.

This stereotype too is self-fulfilling. A woman who cannot enjoy sex, for whatever reason (her husband, it may be, is repulsive to her either because of his style as a lover or because of the contempt with which he treats her out of bed), may become bitter believing she is missing her womanly fulfillment, the great soul-shaking pleasure that would make the rest of the misery of being a woman worthwhile.

It's useless to claim that we aren't programmed to desire sex, to reach for it, to need it. Even when we know something is false our conditioning drives us to continue to act it out. In this case it is very difficult even to sort out what is true and what is false.

A woman in her forties wrote to me as follows: "Now I realize all that about it's being an instinct, but I think there's something more to the story. When I reflect on my own past experience, I can rarely find a time when I was driven to it from inside need. I'm not saying if I didn't have it for a long period (which hasn't ever happened to me), I might not feel the instinct, but I'm saying we need some evidence of just how much because I suspect that even the minimum is far, far less than is believed. ... I know I talked myself into most sex probably looking for the "earth-moving orgasm" which maybe was a hoax anyway. What if no one had given me those words with which I talked myself into it? I begin to distrust it all. Reminds me of that line from Notes from the First Year: sometimes you'd rather play ping pong."

No doubt there are some innate needs, or at least propensities. But a propensity can be culturally built into an obsession or culturally killed off, sometimes simply by never reinforcing it.

I personally suspect that some form of sex urge may turn out to be innate. Human beings reproduced before they had an elaborate social organization institutionalizing sexual intercourse and before full page color ads in magazines urging women to "Be Some Body".

And if it turns out that this urge is not that



strong, it might still be worth keeping (i.e. reinforcing) if it affords people physical pleasure or pleasures of intimacy. But it should be taken for granted that it must be pleasurable to both parties, always: which means it must never be institutionalized by law or culture. And if it is a basic "drive" felt by both men and women, there is no need to institutionalize it to ensure its survival.

What we "see" when we look inside may correspond very poorly to reality. We're saturated with a particular story about what's inside. Moreover, we've been saturated with this all our lives, and it has conditioned us and made us what we are. We feel that we need sex, but the issue is very confused. What is it we really need? Is it orgasms? Intercourse? Intimacy with another human being? Stroking? Companionship? Human kindness? And do we "need" it physically or psychologically?

Intercourse, in the sense of the physical act which is the ultimate aim of so much anxiety, plotting and consuming, is not necessarily the thing we are really longing for, any more than, in the more obvious cases, it is the consumer products advertising builds up neurotic longing for.

Physically, there is a certain objective tension and release, at least for a man, when excitation proceeds to orgasm. With a woman even this physical issue is much less clear: most women don't have orgasms at all, and very few always have them. I think we might all agree that that isn't why we go to bed with a man. In any case an orgasm for a woman isn't a release in the same sense that it is for a man, since we are capable of an indefinite number, remaining aroused the whole time, limited only by exhaustion. The release we feel, therefore, is psychological.

A psychological tension to get this man, to possess him in a certain intimate sense, is released when we "get him" through his orgasm. We then enjoy the pleasure of closeness because he is more open to us (provided he is open, and doesn't just turn over and go to sleep, or jump up to attend to something else on his mind, his attention easily distracted now).

Without denying that sex can be pleasurable, I suggest that the real thing we seek is closeness,

merging, perhaps a kind of oblivion of self that dissolves the terrible isolation of individualism. The pleasure argument doesn't impress me very much. A lot of things are pleasurable without our getting the idea that we can't live without them, even in a revolutionary context. I can think of certain foods, certain music, certain drugs, whose physical pleasurable-ness compares favorably even to good sex.

Moreover, destruction of sense of isolation through communication, community, human kindness, and common cause are all available from other women as you work together in the struggle against oppression. With other women you are more than friends, you are sisters. It would be a mistake to brush off too quickly the spiritual strength to be gained from sisterhood or to overestimate the solace in the arms of a man, just because that is, traditionally, women's only resort.

What I want to suggest is not that sex is by its nature evil and destructive, but that it is not an absolute physical need: the assumption that it is an absolute physical need is evil and the patterns of behavior that grow out of that assumption are destructive.

Most of us recognize that sexual relationships often turn out to be evil and destructive in a society where dehumanization, exploitation, and oppression of women is so deeply imbedded into the culture. What we seek is the exception, the rare case where we have, or think for a little while that we might have, the right guy and the right circumstances.

But even in love we are limited when we believe that we must screw to express love. We are programmed to think that not only is sex the only way to demonstrate or prove our love, it is the only (or best) way to express it. And in this dangerous and alienating society we are always very anxious to demonstrate, to prove, and to express our love, and to have the affections of our lover demonstrated, proved, and expressed to us. For men this is doubly compelling because sex for a man is the only or best way to prove or express his virility, both by the demonstration of sexual potency and by the imposing of his will on her.

To the extent that this is true, then, we are conditioned to that one mode of expression and turn to it uncritically. But we need to develop new nonsexual



ways of relating to people, to men as well as women.

The obsession with genital sexuality, and screwing in particular, cheats us out of a world of rich possibilities. We think that love is sex love, genital sex love. Therefore we can't love women or men we aren't sexually involved with or interested in.

Affection too is identified with genital sex and except for children, pets, and a few close relatives, all physical affection must be limited to our assigned male sex partner. Even communication, human contact and understanding, is assumed to be available only in the intimacy of genital sexual contact.

All desire for love, companionship, physical affection, communication, and human kindness therefore translate to us into a desire for sex. This is pathetically narrow, impossibly limiting. Especially since it can be asked with some justice whether it is very common to obtain this communication, this human kindness, this companionship and affection we seek. It's what we want, all right, but we must ask of it, as we ask of the patent medicine which promises just what we want, does it really do that? And if not, perhaps it is, in practice, a fraud.

In fact, as women have frequently observed, sex can be a fast way to ruin a good relationship. Either because the man just can't treat her as an equal when he's so personally involved, or because he doesn't know how to treat a woman equally in a sexual relationship, or because he was secretly or subconsciously after the conquest all along.

Another problem is that men have a different view of love and sex than women and for the most part women do not know this. They assume they are making equal and similar investments.

Studies have been made of what men and women think love is, what love means to them. Affection and companionship are first on the women's lists, with security and other elements following, and sex turns up as number 8. Men reverse this with sex first. Companionship and affection are secondary goals for men. This orientation of men, coupled with the set of cultural attitudes (and fears) men have toward women, make the sexual love relationship a poor place for a woman to seek communication and human understanding.

However, as long as we are able to make clear

demands of a relationship, to insist that the man fulfill certain requirements or we shall do without him, thank you, then we can keep our heads above water. These requirements might be: (1) He is sexually interested in me, not just interested in sex with me the one who was closest at hand. (2) He is not indifferent to me aside from the sex; he has tender feelings, loyalty, perhaps even love for me. (3) He respects me as a person, is willing to discuss things with me, does not browbeat me, lecture me, or disparage my opinions or projects.

It is when we are not free, or do not feel free, to make such a set of minimum demands on a relationship that the serious trouble arises. And we are not free when we are in the grip of the false conditioning that decrees that we need sex. We are not free if we believe the culture's ominous warnings that we will become "horny" (what a callous, offensive word) and frustrated and neurotic and finally shrivel up into prunes and have to abandon hope of being good, creative, effective people. We are not free if we believe that we, like the lower animals, are driven by something which is not only instinctual but mindlessly, hopelessly, ineluctable.

If we believe all that, then, due to the rarity of good, healthy, constructive relationships between men and women in the world today, we will be forced to accept, even seek out, evil and destructive relationships where we are used, and accept that humiliation in return for the privilege of "using him".

If it were true that we needed sex from men, it would be a great misfortune, one that might almost doom our fight. (Meanwhile, the belief that it is true can serve the same function.) Fortunately, it is not true. When we seek sex it is by conscious intelligent choice. We wish to experience through intimacy human kindness, communication, back-to-the-womb merging and oblivion, child-like openness.

We do it because we think it's the right thing to do. We may be mistaken. We may only think it's the right thing because we think that we will turn into neurotic bitches if we don't. But we don't do it because we are sexual beings who cannot "deny our sexuality".

According to this argument, to have sexual feelings,



or an energy that could be rapidly converted into sexual energy, and yet to choose not to engage in sexual intercourse but rather to expend that energy on something else which seems, at the moment, of higher priority, is to "deny" our sexuality.

This is what men have done to us all along. (They do not apply this same logic to themselves.) Because they only relate to us sexually they conclude that we are just sexual beings. If we then function on any other level something is seriously out of joint since in effect we are "denying" that we are primarily sexual beings.

But in fact, it is only if we are merely sexual beings, exclusively sexual beings, that choosing to put our energy elsewhere indicates any kind of denial. (The great scientist or artist or writer who puts all his energy in his work is not denying anything--that would be to insult him--he simply feels that the day is only so long and for this particular time his work is the most important thing to him.)

Personally, I recognize that I have sexual feelings. The exact nature and origin of them is open to debate, but I have no doubt that there is an objective, physical reality involved at least to some extent. However, I and I alone will decide what importance these feelings have in my life as a human being.

We are not living in an ideal society and "post-revolutionary" characters or life styles might well hinder revolution or make it impossible. The fact that in a good society women might want to produce children, at least until the perfection of the artificial womb, is no reason for me to take myself out of the struggle by having children now under these conditions.

Similarly, the belief that sex would have a place in a good society does not necessarily mean that we must engage in it now. That decision must be based on the objective conditions of the present. Let me say something about the objective conditions of the present.

We are crippled people living in an evil and destructive world. We have a great deal to do beyond the mere business of living. There is much work that needs to be done, and not, by any means, just the work of liberating people and making a revolution.

There is the work of rebuilding ourselves, learning to know ourselves and our potentials, learning to respect ourselves, learning to respect and work with other women. We must overcome all the self-destructive patterns we have been taught in a lifetime of being female.

This work of reclaiming ourselves and making a revolution in women's minds in order to free all of us is the most important work. If a particular sexual relationship or encounter is convenient, appropriate, and pleasurable, if it is not demeaning or possessive or draining in any way, you might decide to choose to invest some of your precious self in it.

But remember how precious your time and your energy and your ego is, and respect yourself enough to insist that the rewards be equal to the investment.

Dana Densmore  
June, 1969

"SEXUALITY: Sex is not part of a relationship; on the contrary, it is a solitary experience, non-creative, a gross waste of time. The female can easily-far more easily than she may think-condition away her sex drive, leaving her completely cool and cerebral and free to pursue truly worthy relationships and activities; but the male, who seems to dig women sexually and who seeks constantly to arouse them, stimulates the highly-sexed female to frenzies of lust, throwing her into a sex bag from which few women ever escape. The lecherous male excites the lustful female; he has to-when the female transcends her body, rises above animalism, the male, whose ego consists of his cock, will disappear.

Sex is the refuge of the mindless. And the more mindless the woman, the more deeply embedded in the male 'culture', in short, the nicer she is, the more sexual she is. The nicest women in our 'society' are raving sex maniacs. But, being just awfully, awfully nice they don't, of course, descend to fucking-that's uncouth-rather they make love, commune by means of their bodies and establish sensual rapport..."

Valerie Solanas  
S.C.U.M. Manifesto



I am just---ME.

Covered with scars and thorns,  
Tears BLASTING from my eyes,  
ME.

In your bed  
I have been left for dead too often  
(and sometimes I did die)  
For you to kill me again.

See  
That no matter what you have done  
I am still here.  
And it has made me dangerous, and wise.

And brother,  
You cannot whore, perfume, or suppress me any more:  
I have my own business in this skin  
And on this planet.

Gail Murray  
March, 1970



Indra Dean Allen



## FEMINISM UNDERMINES

### I.

All "civilized" societies and many "primitive" societies are structured on the assumption that women are less capable of social contribution than men. This is often manifested in the notion that women are capable of a different kind of contribution than men ("separate but equal") or that they are selfish or frigid if they don't contribute their sexuality in some way (most often through motherhood). This has meant a division of labor by sex which has accorded woman a private, home-centered, emotional world of childbearing and sex.

All manifestations of the assumption that women are humanly different must be destroyed. The few biological differences between men and women should not mean that women are relegated to an entirely different role. The fact that women can bear children should not mean that they bear total responsibility for the raising of those children. The fact that women cannot lift as much weight as men should not mean that they are considered intellectually, emotionally, spiritually or otherwise physically weaker (women are constitutionally far stronger than men). Basically, it is the attitude (with its manifestations) that women are different that we want to destroy. It has resulted in a pattern of sex roles that forces men as well as women to fulfill their definition by sex before they can define themselves as individuals. For men this has meant that their activities and gestures represent aggression and power. Men have exerted these qualities over women and derived a great deal of psychological reward from women's responses of submission. For women, the sex role system has not only predefined the quality of their thought and action, but it has restricted their activity. Any woman who does not make herself appealing to men or who chooses not to bear children or engage in extensive sexual relations is thereby considered not only an undesirable woman, but an "antisocial" person.

When we speak of the freedom to define oneself, we mean also freedom from the poles of aggression and passivity. To choose between these poles is to have

no choice at all. Their existence is the result of the sex role system. Because children are trained one way or the other and not allowed to incorporate characteristics of the "opposite" sex into their behavior, these qualities become intensely polarized. This has meant the major loss in productivity of half the human race, for passivity for women has meant no right to assertion whatsoever. It has also meant a great loss of constructive activity by men. They waste a great deal of their time in frantic attempts to prove their virility.

Female Liberation means very literally the liberation of the concept of the female. (When I use "female" or "male" qualitatively, I am referring to the socialized patterns. I do NOT mean to imply that these characteristics are biological differences.) The assertion of the male concept has created a chaotic world - massive powers destroying each other in the quest for more power, economies dependent on wars of aggression, masses of oppressed peoples caught in intricate hierarchies of caste and class and ineffectual bureaucracies intent on the preservation of centralized modes of decision-making. Hierarchy, centralization and the patriarchal family are all manifestations of aggression. Our perception of other possibilities has been blinded by male patterns of hierarchy, i.e. the exploitation of males. Yet in "primitive" matriarchal cultures these patterns did not exist. Authority and children were cared for collectively. They were viewed as the responsibility as well as the future of the culture as a whole. They were not owned by private individuals.

We hear a great deal of talk now about humanizing our technology - restructuring it in order to serve consumers rather than producers. Since the consumer is associated with the female quality of receptiveness, it is only through the demand that this quality be respected that this can occur. It has been designated a female role to care for others and to function non-competitively. Only if this consciousness is created in all humans can our "civilization" hope to survive. At present all the manifestations of the male patterns of aggression are coming into conflict. The contradictions in the sex role system are becoming blatant as man is on the verge of destroying himself



with the "civilization" he has created. The question appears now not to be whether or not man will destroy himself, but how; will it be the bomb, the population explosion, pollution, the raping of the earth's resources or the uprisings of oppressed peoples? We can only hope to survive if these problems are evaluated and dealt with according to necessity rather than as political power plays; if femaleness as a quality is asserted and respected. Only if we work with nature, respecting her needs rather than violating them, can we solve these problems and create a civilization where people can grow in harmony with each other and with nature.

## II.

The masculine ideology has defined all values, structures and ideals to serve its interests. The fact that the soft, frail and made-up female stands as the ideal of feminine beauty shows how men have warped even the aesthetic in an attempt to feel more masculine. Because these definitions are intended to preserve a pattern that superficially benefits the male ego, they are inherently immature. People strive to assume the definitions of themselves and of fulfillment that pervade our culture and are thereby stunted in the growth process. The concept of power is perhaps the most grossly misconstrued. Because political power has been maintained in the hands of a few and misused by those few, we have come to think of power in those terms. So some say that women have no power. True, they don't hold the kind of power that is acknowledged as established authority. Yet they can exert a manipulative and therefore demeaning kind of power. They can use their services or the threat of the non-availability of these services to create change. They can also exert authority over their children that is potentially the most inhuman kind of power held by one person. Power should instead mean the freedom to be respected and to respect oneself in one's exertion of human authority. If everyone had power, the concept could no longer exist as it does now. Strength should in the same way include those qualities of self-respect, sensitivity and understanding rather than superficial assertions of masculinity. To support the masculine ideology, security has meant

assurance of one's rank in the social and economic hierarchy. Only if this hierarchy didn't exist and people were encouraged to figure out the world for themselves, could security come to mean internal stability.

The process of civilization has meant the triumph of the masculine ideal. The most "civilized" cultures are those that exert the most control over other cultures - that have developed technology to its greatest extent at the risk of total annihilation and the loss of human motivation or consideration. Inherent in the dialectic of an increasingly extreme assertion of the male principle is its own destruction. It's not an accident that the female liberation movement has begun now, in the midst of international opposition to the manifestations of male assertion (imperialism). This assertion has gone too far. It can no longer be veiled as the advancement and spreading of civilization to the benefit of all mankind. Hierarchy stunts and subverts the civilizing process. Although there have been attempts by men at de-centralization (anti-trust, anti-monopoly laws, balance of powers), they could not succeed. For the fundamental and basic pattern of centralization was not perceived - the concentration of all power in the hands of men. Efforts have been geared toward the balance of male powers, rather than toward breaking it up, thus maintaining the superiority of men.

The process of civilization must now arrive at a more humane means of integrating our wishes and desires with reality. Technology made this possible to some extent. It allowed some a life of leisure while being provided with the luxuries as well as the necessities of life. Yet because it has been used to provide well only for the few, it has become an inhuman and oppressive force for the many. If our culture were consumer rather than producer oriented so that we employed machine slaves rather than human slaves, used the potential of science to aid people in medical research, etc. rather than creating bombs, and provided everyone with a certain amount of leisure, technology could be a great force in the furthering of civilization. But as it stands now it is not only immature, but destructive.

Sanity has been defined as the ability to survive



emotionally and to function in this culture. Yet to be considered sane, one must conform to the expectations and definitions that now exist. One must suppress all attempts to truly integrate one's ideals with reality, for "reality" dictates that we must not question or violate the male patterns. A "sane" population thereby stunts the growth of civilization. Morality and the legality that derives from it have also had more to do with conforming to established patterns of behavior than preserving one's self-respect by doing what one truly believes to be right. A moral culture would allow the greatest freedom of creative assertion possible without violating this freedom of others.

The "New Left" has brought up an amusing dialectic in its criticisms of the feminist groups. It puts down many of our meetings for being personal rather than political. It's patterned notion of political change involves historic, romantic images of fighting in the streets. The Left can't see that for women to talk about their relations with men and society, and to discover the patterns that exist and the similarity of their situations is the most revolutionary change possible. They will no longer be willing to live isolated, private lives, believing men's definitions of them. They will fight for female liberation now, for they understand how it immediately relieves their lives. The "political" actions of the New Left can help no one relieve their immediate oppression. We all must wait until "after the revolution". No wonder women don't trust politics. The Left sounds like it's giving a campaign speech. We can be sure that if discussion isn't "personal" - if it doesn't seem vital to our everyday lives - that it won't produce change in our favor.

### III.

There can be no universal or lasting liberation until there is female liberation. The oppression of many different castes and classes of people is possible only because the patterns of male dominance have not been fundamentally destroyed. These patterns can only be eliminated by the assertion of feminist principles for they are historically as well as psychologically linked with the oppression of the female.

The first division of labor was by sex. The question that has not yet been adequately answered deals with why this division of labor resulted in the oppression (i.e. the inability of a category of people to define themselves and choose freely from equal possibilities) of the female by the male. There have been and still are a few cultures in which women were "in power", but, as I have mentioned, this did not result in the oppression of the male. The answer probably has something to do with men's fear of women. Whether this was originally a fear of the unknown or the different, of that which was not understood (the reproductive functions), or of the blood of the menstrual cycle, has yet to be discovered. Yet the taboos associated with the menstrual cycle, pregnancy and childbirth are the only taboos that all cultures have held in common.

Men have been able to deal with their fear of women only by institutionalizing her differences. By relating to the abstract (religion, mores) men have continued to feel in control of situations they otherwise were afraid of. At any rate, the oppressor-oppressed pattern was first established in the domination of the female by the male. This pattern existed long before the manifestations of private property and class occurred. There are some anthropological analyses that declare that the downfall of a universal matriarchy occurred when men conquered women and instituted a class society. But there never has been a universal matriarchy. Nor have all patriarchal cultures derived from the overthrow of a matriarchal structure. If indeed women held at least equal amounts of authority with men, how could they submit to their own overthrow? This seems to be a gross distortion of history that's calculated to make women fight for the destruction of class society if they want to be free. But class society cannot be destroyed until competition, aggression, hierarchy and power are dealt with fundamentally. Only women's groups have questioned these in theory and practice and worked with alternative structures. Feminism undermines all assumptions in that it presents and works with alternative institutions and its manifestations affect the lives of everyone.

Lisa Leghorn  
March, 1970





## TARZAN HAD LONG HAIR TOO

There is a common idea that long hair on men is a sign of today's liberation from sex roles, a symbol of the approach toward unisex in attitudes, and a step by men toward femininity.

I suggest it is just the opposite. Rebecca West, in an article in Mademoiselle, says she hears in rock music bullroarings, the advertisement of virility. I suspect much the same can be said of long hair.

Longish hair on men is quite in style now, and I take no exception to the general trend of the style; in fact, for reasons I will go into later, I am in favor of it. (For those who can't wait, a hint: anti-sex is antiwoman.)

What I'm talking about when I suggest that long hair is a bullroaring of virility is the very deliberate, very serious expression of rebellion that is embodied in the hair of Hells Angels men, in the hair of Frank Zappa, in the hair of the various rock musicians, hippies, and miscellaneous "freaks" who have consciously cultivated a wild dangerous image, the most striking characteristic of which is the long, dirty-looking, unkempt hair.

If long hair is a rebellion against something, it is against the society that demands that men be less male, which is to say less bull-like, i.e. neat, clean, inoffensive. These virtues are "feminine." In rebellion against the society that forces them to be femininely inoffensive, castrated, they grow their hair long and unkempt and dirty, sticking out in all directions, mortally offending and profoundly repulsing most of society (not just the little old ladies but even more, lower class and working people), which is exactly the effect they wish to have.

Their girls (the "chicks") approve of them for this manly arrogance in not caring what society thinks of them, for rejecting the castration society wants to impose on them. Cutting off Samson's hair symbolizes castration; no woman wants to be a Delilah, jealous of her man's strength.

Very long hair on men is not feminine. It is "feminine" to want to be attractive, appealing. Women may wish to be daring, but never offensive, never repulsive. Women are always conscious of how they are



affecting others. They may choose to make statements of originality, imaginativeness, modernity, etc. with their appearance, but they never wish to appear ugly, dirty, frightening, or vicious-looking.

Long hair on men may be repulsive for more complicated reasons than that it looks dirty and ugly. The fact that these men choose to rebel at all is dangerous and frightening.

Elizabeth Hardwick in her Mademoiselle article says: "The violent resentment of the long-haired young man is a measure of the greater importance accorded to the behavior of boys, the threat their swerving from the traditional paths poses for all of society. The masculine role is not a preference; upon it almost every institution of society depends: government, business, medicine, law, police, defense, heavy labor, sports."

But the hero lives by his own rules. Women may be determined by duty, but the real man determines his own life, and if that means rejecting all the values of his parents and his world, it is his pride to do that.

The point of this article is not to suggest that the freedom to actualize or express a creative individuality is bad, or that wildness (in its good sense a tonic to civilization--as Thoreau: "In Wildness is the preservation of the World."), should be chained or repressed or cemented over. I do not believe in castration, physical or psychological, of men or women.

And I do not doubt that there is an honest element of constructive freedom and healthy wildness in those expressions which are the most shocking, the most offensive to the narrow, repressed, frightened Middle America.

However, there is no need, in my view, for freedom or wildness to be offensive to our sense of civilization. And if there are aspects of wildness that are offensive to that sense, as for instance the violence of the kill-or-be-killed aspect of nature, that is forgivable to the extent that it is innocent, which is to say to the extent that it is not intentional.

Animals function as best they can in the interests of the survival of the species; the black widow spider

devours her mate after copulation so she will not starve between fertilization and the laying of her eggs--well fed, she is content to let him go.

Nor is it the point of the article that it is bad to rebel against the repression of sexuality. I would, of course, like to see that repression replaced with something more humane and respectful, more conscious of human dignity and intelligence, than the flaunted rutting that is the usual "cure" for "middle class class hang-ups."

I see intentional offensiveness in much of this deliberate ugliness, this cultivation of a dirty and dangerous look.

The repressed, the "hung-up," are having the "cure" shoved down their throats. While I don't deny that shock can be effective, in this case I think it will not work: partly because I do not believe that the counter life style offered is a moral one, but mainly because the "cure" is being presented with no analysis of the cause of the disease.

Sexual repression is a symptom. Its causes are mixed. Two elements are relevant here.

There is a large element of fear of women, fear of women's sexuality, the feeling that women are repulsive in their sexuality. Both men and women suffer from that last feeling, and it's a problem that will probably persist as long as women are sexual material for men rather than transcendent human beings with whom men must deal as individuals.

And there is another feeling, the feeling that





comes in response to sexist sexuality, when women are used sexually by men who consider them slightly sub-human, men who are struggling with their own fear of women and their sense of women's repulsiveness.

When parents wish to protect their young daughter from sex, they both remember what sex meant when they were young: the mother remembers how she felt used, soiled, perhaps how she was treated with contempt afterwards. The father remembers how he callously used girls in his youth, and doesn't want anyone treating his daughter, whom he loves, in that way.

These parents might even be aware that nonexploitative love and sex are possible, in theory, and still go to great lengths to protect their daughter from the sort of sex they know (or believe) is waiting for her. That sort of sex is dirty, by anyone's definition.

For the most part I find it appropriate that most of society is offended by the dirty and dangerous look. It is meant to be offensive, and that comes across very well.

The various excuses offered--that the long hair is unsanitary, or that you can't tell the boys from the girls--are just excuses. The real reason it is offensive is that it intends to offend. It is anti-intellectual and a violent and insensitive rejection of values people cherish.

The last thing men want to do is to look like women. To make sure there is no confusion, the long-hairs usually also sport beards, mustaches, and/or sideburns. In fact, as longer hair has become more fashionable for "straight" men, it is interesting to note that sideburns have appeared simultaneously, lengthening with the hair.

It is not this slightly longer hair that is offensive, of course. The boyish Kennedy shag, the Paul McCartney thatch that invites the exploration of feminine fingers into its clean sensual softness, these have been looked askance at, certainly, but they have never repulsed anyone, even when they were ahead of fashion.

In fact, short hair, for example a marine crew cut these days when shaggy hair on men is fashionable and expected, is perhaps even more objectionable. This is a case of going to the other extreme to avoid resembling women.

And simple fear of resembling women is not all that's involved in painfully short hair on men. It is an anti-sex phenomenon, which naturally means anti-woman. Afraid of women, repulsed by women's dangerous genitals, they are therefore repulsed by and afraid of sexuality in general, including their own. To deal with this they cut their hair short, as a rejection of sensuality, freedom, luxury, etc.

Hair traditionally represents energy. Body hair on men represents baser forces, hair on the head spiritual forces. Hair also represents fertility, a symbolism apparently stronger in the mystique surrounding long hair on women.

Although the symbolism of spiritual force is clearly present in the case of the Offensively Hairy, it seems that much of the body hair symbolism has become involved in it, partly perhaps because it gives the appearance of being an extension of uncontrolled body hair.

The different significance of long hair on men and women is striking. For women long hair is feminine, lushly fertile (mother earth), passive, womanly, sexy, objectifying, romantic, impractical, old-fashioned. On men it is virile, rebellious, a symbol of strength (Samson), a proclamation of his existence in a state of nature, uncivilized and undomesticated (Tarzan).

Personally, I mistrust the primitive. I have never noticed that women fared very well when men were emulating apes.





## EPILOGUE

We are now seeing what may be beginnings of a trend toward men cutting their hair. John Lennon, Ringo, even (unless the picture I saw was misleading) Frank Zappa. This is mainly a backing off from the virility statement of the long hair. It was just too much of a struggle to maintain that image against the would-be castrators; it seems easier to be a little less virile and consequently a little more anonymous. It is also something else. Men discovered, as women always knew, that long hair is a drag: it is impractical, difficult to care for, to keep clean and out of the way.

The virility statement may not turn out to be worth the loss of privacy (being shouted at on the street by "straights") and loss of freedom and comfort ("Oh, no, I don't have a rubber band with me!"). It will be interesting to see whether men do give long hair up as a drag, and if so, whether they can learn to relax about virility or if they merely substitute something else.

Dana Densmore  
April, 1970



## EVE'S SEX UNDER GOD'S LAW

All religions have evolved from the unequal relationship of the male sex to the female, and have been grounded in a prehistoric acceptance of the different kinds of labor each sex was best fitted to perform for the survival of the entire society. Early statues of female deities with swollen breasts and heavy hips show that the female was indistinguishable from her role as breeder. Later goddesses like the Egyptian Isis and the Babylonian Astarte, the Greek Demeter and Roman Cybele retain a close identification with the prostrate, passive earth. Plowed and seeded, their flesh brought forth new life; to their wombs it returned to decay and die. Certain goddesses had taught women how to plant crops, to weave cloth and make tools needed for agricultural and domestic work. Household ceremonies reminded mankind of their life-giving generosity. But these same goddesses presided at the crises of birth and death. The virgin Artemis and the withered and ghostly Hecate were both aspects of the moon's cycle.

Man, the hunter and warrior, worshipped a horned god whose aggressive energy insured men's success in securing meat for the community. The essential characteristic of this god was sexual potency. Stone phalli symbolized his intimidating energy. In the heavens, man found gods who carried on wars (resembling his) in an attempt to secure control of the cosmos. The





sun was the giver of light and order; its free energy mastered the expanse of the earth. Myths told how day triumphed over night. The isolation of light from darkness was Yahweh's first creative act. Greek Zeus conquered all enemies to become the father of a generation of gods, a law-giver, but still he behaved like a trickster. Part of the role of a god or hero was to outwit rival challengers. The peace that male deities established over the female earth was based on a state of continual watchfulness and petty warfare. Eventually a firm hierarchy was asserted that grouped female and male divinities into "families" within regions of authority; there were deities of the ocean, of the earth and of the heavens. And over all existed the paternal protection of a Zeus, or a Jupiter or a Yahweh.

Males constructed civilization upon what they abstracted. Men were the formulators of ideas (that is, an abstract ordering of material data) and women the fleshly substance of those intellectual conceptions. Men used cognitive thought to handle the problems of living and women used intuitive perception. The "ideas" men created to organize and dominate nature were come to by objectifying and making alien the material which these ideas defined. Man asserted himself against things and against that producer of human "things", woman, in order to get beyond his circumstance of being animal. He institutionalized this struggle in a succession of ideologies, beginning with religion on the level of "magic". Gradually, he recognized that the world had begun from a primal chaos, from a state of no word, of no name strong enough to command any particle of the chaos into rational order. This pre-conscious state of the universe was female. "Nature" was the term man became able to use when he had reached a stage of consciously separating himself from, and exploiting a part of that universe. This happened when males as a group began to understand their freedom from the physical effects of reproduction to mean a right to clan or gens ownership of females.

God (a deification and a reassurance of that domination man fought to exert over natural processes) was revealed to have created every individual creature by His Word, His Breath. Each item in His program of life

was bound, therefore, to submit to His law, His understanding. This was religious reality. Woman participated in it only as she was called forth and given duties by God.

The Christian systems of Catholicism and Protestantism have described and regulated what was to be called Reality. Millions of European and American females have been forced to accept the nature Christianity has assigned them and to examine their daily life and conduct according to what it has taught was "good" for each sex. Its outlines are still apparent in the mental, emotional, and physical training given to females.

Although Catholicism matured as a feudal institution and Protestantism originated and evolved as the expression of middle class needs, both systems have organized female people and female awareness (qualities females developed by caring for children and males) for the benefit of male people. God placed females under the protection of fathers, husbands and brothers. He then organized males under the authority of certain powerful men, who, by fact of birth, wealth, or ability to compete aggressively, were believed destined to be superior protectors of other males. The ideas of church (a spiritual body to which every Christian belonged by baptism, and in which all classes and both sexes were made equal by grace) and state (the enforced protection of all life and property by an armed nobility) constituted the whole of society.

Religion always serves to explain how the particular, as a single self or as part of a human grouping, is related to the cosmic. The dualism established by conceiving female as other than male, set male against female. Female character was seen as external, mysterious and threatening to male existence. Western theology and philosophy elaborated on the contradiction between the categories of male order (names and laws) and female chaos (phenomena), of mind and body, spirit and matter. "Passive" matter was subordinate to "active" spirit. Just as the male sperm was thought to animate inert menstrual blood accumulated in the female's womb, the radiant Word of God was believed to give form and significance to human society.

The medieval church can be understood as an earthly



model of the City of God, the Universal Kingdom of Christ. Heaven was mapped out as a supra-physical region and was administered like a Roman city-state or a feudal fief. God demanded loyalty and obedience from the inhabitants of his domain. Their rights were granted them from above, according to His Will. Functions of nobles and princes were sanctified with church ceremonies; for example, a ruler's coronation and the ceremony of knighthood. Princes, along with bishops and abbots, administered a law that they received from divine authority. This law described and protected each subordinant social grouping.

Simultaneously there existed another contrary authority-the Devil, a former angel who had challenged the established power with his own pride and been cast down to the subterranean region, Hell. All creatures that did not turn to God, were natural prey for Satan's heresy. The church taught that original sin was inherent in flesh; men and women inherited the mortal consequences of Adam and Eve's disobedient craving to make their own decisions. Their act of eating fruit from the tree of knowledge brought about sexual awareness and reproduction. To take pleasure from intercourse would be to submit to mortality. Since it was the female who first succumbed to the seduction of the world, a male for his salvation could not take delight in her flesh. Marriage permitted a man to procreate offspring but chastity was valued as a higher discipline to be practiced by the clergy and monastic orders.

The evil in people expressed itself first in overbearing pride or in greed. Pride overthrew the order of loyalties; it was an usurpation of importance and power inappropriate to the person's given position. It brought about uncontrolled rage or, conversely, deep despair. Greed introduced envy, an unsatisfied craving for things. A distinction was made between these mental sins and the sins of the flesh, like intemperance and lust. These latter belonged to the mundane world to which women were assigned. Lust was pictured as a woman holding a mirror, but Pride was shown as a man being thrown down from his horse. Catholicism recognized that masculine thought might try to master life without God's permission. Woman,

being sensual flesh, simply seduced man to challenge God; her Vanity only reflected his aggression and never expressed an equivalent human pride.

Evil deeds were potential heresy because they implied an alienation from God. They threatened the ordained functioning of Catholic society. The economic control of the landowning church over the lives of the baptized had been given abstract justification by declaring that only the Church could offer God's saving grace to death-doomed humanity.



Daily, during the Mass, God's grace transformed the material elements of bread and wine into food for the spirit. All changes in society, all occurrences or developments in people not clearly sanctioned by this grace might be the work of the Anti-Christ (the apocalyptic form of Satan).

The program of salvation promoted by Catholicism emphasized obedience and good works. The highest form of Christian life was a monastic or priestly asceticism. Such practice required the dedication of all of one's physical and mental efforts toward a life remote from the ordinary life most people found it necessary to lead. The isolation and rigid self-control it demanded were more appropriate to male behavior than to female. Women were taught to suppress physical pain and feelings of despair in order to survive. When entering the nunnery they put aside a need to be physically beautiful in order better to dedicate their affections and actions to a spiritual husband - Christ. Control by a husband who demanded offspring and pleasure was exchanged for a law which denied the value of these desires and humiliated a woman for her completely sexual role. A man, when he became a monk, gave up his personal claim to property, and placed his personal aggressiveness at the service of the Church, with whose male hierarchy he could closely identify himself. His voluntary joining of the brotherhood of



the Church existed as an important and glorious decision. It depended upon the existence of church estates, monastic production and donated treasure. Self-discipline took outward forms in fasting, absolute chastity, the giving up of all personal possessions, even in the punishment of the body by flagellation, etc. These actions vividly testified to the ideas the Church held about the spiritually pure state.

Those masses of men and women who could not afford to practice asceticism were rewarded, according to their obedience (humility), with grace derived from the accumulated deeds of saints and martyrs. The poor, the serfs, females and children were instructed to imitate the pure life of the spirit by giving their time, goods and trust to those institutions and persons tangibly embodying God's idea of what was best. Through unquestioning devotion they could counteract the harmful effects of being female, not adult, or inferior in class. Various pictures were drawn to describe the common route to heaven. One was the Ladder of Virtue. Those climbing up rung by rung are offered aid from above by saints and angels (the hierarchy of heaven) in their struggle to reach God.

Mercy was the healing power that God, as feudal lord, exercised on behalf of sinners. Gradually this reprieve from death and from the tortures of hell was begged for and granted through a female intermediary: the Virgin was elevated to mediate between the masculine demand for absolute order and human (feminine) perversity. Mercy, the medieval antidote for arbitrary violence and for the physical injustices of the world system was never a legitimate part of the order. It was provided supernaturally through paternal compassion. The real contradiction that existed between the abilities of poor and rich, of males and females to follow the rule of the church was obscured by the artifice of a superimposed mercy.

Humility also seemed to smooth out contradictions. A humble person bore the flaming anger of princes, the brutality of men, neglect, starvation and pregnancy. From this virtue blossomed faith, hope and charity. The governing virtues of courage, prudence and justice that belonged to the warrior, the monarch and to the church militant were ranked above these feminine and sustaining qualities.

The cult of the Virgin Mary introduced another role for "woman", this time within Christianity. Eve had been called the downfall of mankind; she deserved to be portrayed prone beneath God's judgment. It was she who would continue to tempt man away from God through her deadly affinity for the serpent. Mary, chaste and maternal, declared herself the humble servant of God's purpose. Her sympathy could be counted on to work for mankind; the suffering and impoverished could turn to her aid and through her concern feel themselves part of the Church. Imitation of Mary was the official late-medieval program for women; but females themselves continued to be aware of their kinship to Eve. Again and again she was shown crouching at the base of an image of Mary. The church questioned whether females had a real interest in supporting God's rule. They might easily give their attention to the devil, who was not remote in heaven. Woman's female organs bound her to Nature, and Nature in its malevolent aspects, as well as in its tamed appearance, was personified in her. In mastering a woman a man reasserted his ordained rule. If a woman was not wife, mother or daughter, she was to be suspected and feared as witch and temptress.

The witch maintained a relationship with plants and animals that men, and above all, the Church, considered contrary to the knowledge of the world that God revealed to mankind. Intelligence belonged to the educated clerics; they defined what was rational. Women were not only illiterate but they possessed strange intuitive insight, as yet not organized in any positive way into male society. A witch could deform, wither, abort and drive insane. She exercised these powers because she was still part beast, intimate with the monstrous energy of nature. Her cycles of sensation could give birth to destruction as readily as to life.

Further, women who claimed and used this "feminine" power outside of the Christian boundaries were known to be serving the Devil. Woman had betrayed man, and above all, God. Christian feudalism understood this disloyalty as deliberate subservience to the wrong lord. Her perverse actions had to be attributed to the influence of some other male image. Witches were tortured to extort accounts of their devotion to this demonic master. They worshipped him with their bodies,



devoting to him what was most unholy in Christian doctrine. Among other horrors, it was believed that witches murdered their own children to devour them or drink their blood during a Black Mass. It was clear that any female was a potential sorceress. Her position of wife, mother, daughter or nun gave her some safety from such an accusation. Forced testimony and volunteered confessions all declared the same truth: the witch was not able to dominate the cosmos she inhabited, she only served and embodied its evil principle.

Protestantism altered this medieval universe by replacing the requirements of the Catholic nobility with the needs of the middle class. Behind these alterations in dogma and practice the same attitude toward mind and matter persisted, the same desire to make the female an obedient servant of the "good" husband.

The Catholic state had existed as a somewhat uneasy coalition of feudal princes and feudal bishops. The church had its own courts and laws, its taxes and soldiers, while the princes drew upon a sacred authority made unquestionable by the ceremony of coronation. By the 15th century control of reality began to be taken over by another class, the bourgeoisie, whose wealth came from their individual struggle to accumulate and redistribute capital, and not from their possession of a physical territory. Worldly and spiritual governments could no longer be based on a feudal model. Gradually the private family became the source and the pattern for the new national states and for Lutheranism, Calvinism and Puritanism, etc. As an institution, the church was visibly separate from secular government; but as a system of thought Protestantism was even more carefully incorporated into every aspect of business and community through family worship and education.

The family was limited and its ties were more intimate than in the preceding centuries. The concept of the blood line diminished in value as the importance of the husband increased. Previously, females held legal existence only within marriage; beyond its boundaries they were able occasionally to exercise some of the male's powers. As the family changed, women were recognized as creatures to be controlled

from birth on. Laws firmly protected their position within the family hierarchy. At the same time, the roles of wife and mother took on emotional auras. This trend expressed itself in Catholicism in the cult of the Holy Family. Joseph was dignified as husband and Mary was reduced to doting mother.



True knowledge was no longer kept exclusively to the ordained; all who could read had access to the fundamental source of Revelation—the Bible. The Catholic church claimed to provide, through the sacraments, the sole means of grace available to man. But Protestantism declared that such grace could be experienced directly in individual commitment to God's inner law, to the truth written in each and

every heart. The Protestant church functions as a guardian that points out and protects this revelation. Each faithful Christian is in the same relation to God and to the world that a priest is, yet there is no need for him to wear special clothes, be celibate, or in other ways deny his need to participate in everyday business.

The power of God, heaven and hell are still external to society, but the judgment of the sinner is not just in the future (after the apocalyptic Battle of Armageddon); right thinking (faith) is visible in a person's earthly career. The Kingdom of God is enjoyed in present wealth, wisdom and prestige.

The program of salvation that Protestantism taught was based on an internalized asceticism. Participation in the world must be controlled by reason. The individual's will-energy motivates him to action that is, at the same time, concrete and moral. The Protestant conception of morality is bound up with the "scientific" law of cause and effect that describes material states and the changes that occur in phenomena. God does not require human beings to be monks and nuns, yet a Christian must be detached from the pleasures



and distresses of his or her situation. "Good" acts were particular actions within the family and society, not extraordinary demonstrations of poverty or chastity. Instead, the love of the husband for his wife and her obedience to him were fundamental examples of the right conduct expected from human beings. The justness of the father was ultimately the righteousness of the whole family, and the family's virtue was that of the state.

Prosperity was proof of "election" to the ranks of the godly. Failure to obtain wealth or prestige was viewed as a crime, not just against God, but against the right functioning of the state. Poverty, ignorance, disease, etc., occurred to punish the individual for not being committed to God.

The Catholic duality of good and evil had to be revised to suit this emergence of rational conscience and individual responsibility. Un-controlled egotism, uncensored emotionality, the intuitive, the non-rational are evil. Egotism was an emotional assertion of power contrary to the workings of Reason. Such a violent demand for control criminally assaulted the legitimate society. Sin originated in bad will, the inability of the mind to control bodily passions. Since faith rests on a personal decision to dedicate the self to God, everyone is responsible for the quality of his or her existence. A person deserves the fortune or misfortune that occurs. It compounded a man or woman's evil for him or for her to rebel against poverty, bad treatment, and child bearing. Virtues no longer solely derived from or contributed to the sacred character of nobility. Instead, the elevation of thrift, orderliness, honesty and industry to virtues sanctioned the behavior of the merchants, manufacturers and artisans. These qualities were also essential to a tidy, pleasant and prosperous home. Both men and women were exhorted to practice thrift and honesty but the woman realized her virtue through careful household management. A man demonstrated his virtue by running an efficient business.

By marriage a man acquired his principal servant. His ancestor Adam had been given Eve as a helpmate. A Husband's first duty was to control the irrational nature of his wife and to bend it to the use of society. This paternal government was seen as a clear

analogy of how God cared for his unchaste and erratic people.

The new idea that females were child-like, unable to learn, to think rationally or to recognize the black/white distinctions between good and evil, was a further development of the early identification of the female with the temporal life of her body. Little children had to be educated away from the barbarism of their flesh. Female children were limited by physical conditions from learning or understanding the behavior that civilized male children. Usually they were not taught to read. Since a female had no intellectual training her conversation was taken to be only an emotional expression of her physical responses. Therefore for her own salvation she was required to turn to the guidance and authority of a husband, who would then stand as responsible for any failing that her greater weakness might bring.

No opportunity was made for females to acquire the knowledge that men were using to construct a technological industrial society. Instead her domestic labor was increasingly romanticized. Daily life was compartmentalized into business (outside the home) and the solitary, private work done inside it. The concept of individuality increased a man's mobility since it allowed him to become more and more detached from the sacred blood community (his lineage) in which his self had been submerged.

Individualism did not benefit the female so immediately. On the contrary, what were practical techniques for curing sickness, for gardening, in fact, all the ingenious household methods perfected over the centuries by females, appeared increasingly petty and absurd when compared to male systems of science, medicine, physics and chemistry. Men had begun to do very different things than they did a few centuries before, but women followed the same rituals. They were left to study in immense detail the areas to which they, as females, were confined. They learned what went into a stew or a coat or the growth of a child, but they were not expected to change circumstances, simply to make sure that all went well. This meant that all aspects of any one thing had to be observed and accepted as part of the development of that thing. Females perceived life in shades of grey.



Built into male intellectual systems was the absolute separation of a good (real) element from a bad (unreal) element. Positive thought depended on denying reality to what could not be rationally conceived. Females were not able to use this sort of analysis and judgment since these tools contradicted a female's acceptance of both good and bad qualities in persons and events. Rational decision depended on the approbation of one half and the degradation of the other half of a single whole. Because of this, females could not be intellectually decisive like males. Women continued to be aware of both sides of the world and to be immobilized by the maternal concern that was expected of them.

No other method was available to enable women to abstract ideas and theories from female experience. When a woman wanted to define her personality as valid, as real, she had to adopt the abstract, other-worldly terminology that religion offered her. Yet the structure of that religious reality rested on her inability to master the conditions of her existence. The sentiments taught her in church sermons and prayer books strengthened her tendency to rely entirely on intuition and good emotions to alter what was unbearable. Because her position was derived from her husband, her god, the best way to affect reality was by influencing his mind.

Men accepted the fact that they did not understand females. They did not need to know more than her outline in order to fit her into their plans. A man stated: "I think, I know", but a woman had to make the bold assertion: "I feel", and wait until the emotion had been judged by men. Mystical passion had belonged to the spiritual elite of the middle ages, a few of whom had been women. As the area of what was called religion contracted, this emotion became fanciful and extravagant rather than visionary and was assigned to women. Devotion to God had been a pure expression of the feudal hierarchy, a loyalty that was rewarded with mental superiority and prestige. In the succeeding centuries it became a completely human-centered erotic feeling, binding females closer and closer to their sexuality. A females' knowledge was restricted to her personal and private response to events. Her language did not contain terms

to objectify and dignify what happened to her. Protestantism refined a series of old-fashioned nouns and adjectives that she was forced to rely on to frame her conception of what caused her despair and misery. The Devil was still an external master, a horned demon who made blood covenants with his servants. But more and more he existed within her as a secret corruption that in extreme moments produced hysteria and convulsions. Dreams and fantasies of her bestial state pursued her. Only the church reached out to exhort her to follow carefully, humbly all the outlines established by paternal government for her perfection.

Within the family the wife was placed between her husband and her children; in the church females made up the body of the congregation, absorbing God's word. They devoted themselves to this abstract revelation giving it actual meaning by their desire to believe in it. A woman prepared home remedies for the sick, gave to charities what time and money her husband approved. Her continued association with the church reinforced her great determination to be a good Christian. Performing these services she forgot, or did not notice her struggle for goodness was necessitated by a deep conviction of her natural susceptibility to evil. Of her abiding worthlessness. If a man was tempted by the world, she played the temptress. The church conceived of her as man had chosen to conceive of her - as the material of the universe: chaotic, fruitful and destructive, but always to be shaped into intelligence by his mental power - his will.

Hilary Langhorst

"I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty."

I Timothy 2: 9-15



## WHY CAN'T MEN LISTEN TO WOMEN?

One common test of whether a man can accept the equality of women is whether or not he is able to listen to women. Very few can, although a good many are quite expert at appearing to listen. Most men think of women as inferiors (even if her IQ is higher than his) and never seriously consider really listening to her ideas.

A person will listen to another if he expects the other person to say something of value. But in the case of men, some worthwhile ideas by women are not of value to them if they think it will become known that the ideas came from a woman. Such is the cultural training of men who seem unable to forget that sing-song refrain heard in childhood: "Talking to a gir-ul! Talking to a gir-ul!" It threatened him with social ostracism if he did not conform; men act as if they still hear it when they talk to women.

Most men simply tune out when a woman gets outside a permissible sphere of domestic and social welfare and into the world of policy-making ideas. The reaction is powerful and physical. They become agitated, disconcerted, and deaf. No matter how you sneak up on the subject, an automatic governor seems to warn men that you are getting into the forbidden area, and their ears and minds close in instant protective reaction.

Many men make no pretense at listening. They do not want to hear any woman's ideas and employ three common methods of silencing the woman who persists in trying to be heard: 1) ignore her ("Did you say something, dear?"). 2) ridicule her ("Ho! Ho! What a funny idea!") or 3) attack her ("You must be stupid if you think that idea has any merit.") Whatever the method, she gets the message: he doesn't want to talk to me on this subject. She may also get another message: something is wrong with men that they cannot listen to women without feeling personally threatened. Unfortunately, some women get a different message: I must be pretty stupid.

A few other men, especially if they know you are interested in female liberation, have learned how to effect a listening pose, although underneath their problem is still the same. This new-style man listens so hard to what you say that he can finish your sentences

for you. It would be ungrateful of you to suggest that it was not what you intended to say, when he is making such an effort to show you he considers you an equal and that he recognizes a worthy thought; it was something he might have said himself. It's his way of telling you how smart he thinks you are.

More aggravating is the man who asks your opinion with great show of accepting you equally but then does not listen to your answer, telling his own opinion instead. Particularly if you pause for a moment to think about his question and how best to articulate a thoughtful answer to it, he will rush in to help you out. It is as if to say that he knows you don't have an answer and he is eager to save you the embarrassment of the long silence or of saying something stupid.

The most obvious non-listener of those who pretend to hear is the one who nods and agrees in order to hurry you through to a conclusion so he can go back to what he was saying before you began. Or, another will launch into such a well-organized refutation when you finish that you know he was not really considering your idea but only scanning it for flaws to build up his argument designed to demolish your idea as soon as you stopped talking. And, finally, men in general seem to have a compulsive need to pass judgment on every idea you present, either favorably or unfavorably, as if you were submitting the idea for their approval. They seem unable to simply listen to your idea and think about it.

If a woman persists in rejecting these men's efforts to avoid listening to her, if she insists upon being heard as an intellectual equal, she is called a "castrating female." But why should listening to a woman threaten a man's sexual identity? What is this terrible insecurity that haunts men? What is it that makes most men incapable of an equal relationship with women?

Women get sick of being forced to change the subject to the limited area that a man feels comfortable in. She is tired of having to talk down to him as if he were a child, because he is unable to talk with her as an equal.

Donna Allen  
February 1970



## THE PLEA FOR GRADUALISM

The plea for gradualism usually comes from men who (they would like us to believe) are solicitous for the success of our movement, but who are actually made profoundly nervous by the idea of any far-reaching liberation of women from womanhood into personhood.

They warn us, helpfully, that we should deal with the "more obvious" issues, the ones we "can hope to win at", by which they mean the public issues such as job equality.

Women who hear this advice as a thinly veiled threat ("don't be so greedy or we won't give you anything") and who feel that their advancement depends upon winning the hearts and minds of men, are frightened into agreement.

Unfortunately, the modest and ladylike approach of devoting your energies to working for your legal rights to job equality will never change women's material situation in any significant way.

First of all, it's logically inconsistent to accept social inferiority but demand job equality. If women are to be subservient to men in the home, why should they have any different relation to men in the world outside?

Secondly, unless these basic relations are changed, it will be impossible in practice to win any equality or respect in the public world.

Men's relation to women on a personal level is the most basic relation, and their treatment of them on a public level is merely a superficial expression of this.

It's true that we see that some men can learn to cope with the phenomenon of women who are their equals, or almost their equals, in the working world, as long as their cozy domestic arrangement with its physical and psychological comforts is not disturbed.

But they can rationalize that these few women colleagues are not threats to the profitable doctrine of male supremacy because working women are not true women but misfits; if they were successful as women they wouldn't have to seek fulfillment in the male world.

However capable the women may be, the men need never think of them as ultimately equal since their essential

natures are as biological (sexual) creatures (wives and mothers) and they have failed at that. Ultimately, then, the more successful a woman is the more pathetic she is.

That reassuring knowledge, plus his stock of "gallantries" that simultaneously illustrate and preserve the social inferiority of women and his stock of stereotypes of "women bosses" (aggressive, paranoid, lesbian, possessed of all the male qualities that are unlovely in women plus all the feminine qualities like over-emotionalism that men consider themselves above) --all this permits a man to tolerate a fair number of women having some degree of job "equality"--especially if there aren't enough qualified men to fill the jobs.

But as long as men keep their basic attitudes about women's nature the women will be thrown out as fast as there are enough qualified male applicants. And why not? The men are the breadwinners, the women are just occupying themselves. Let them go home and have babies and bake bread and make love.

And in fact society as a whole would never permit all women to go to work (even if the economy could absorb them) because it would destroy the family as we know it.

It is exactly this family, the cozy little domestic arrangement we mentioned, that we weren't going to touch out of fear that it might turn some men off, men who might otherwise have been willing to set aside their prejudices and give us a job if we could convince them that it was profitable.

The trouble is that men often think it is unprofitable to hire women because of their prejudices, because of their most basic attitudes toward women and their investment in women's social inferiority. These prejudices make them think things about women that prove the women are unsuitable, or at best less valuable, employees.

But it's not just a matter of lack of information. The information is available, often right before their eyes in their own departments. The misinformation, the myths about women as inferior workers, is created because the men have strong prejudices, strong investments in women's social inferiority. The myths are not the cause of the prejudice.

And you can't talk people into setting aside



prejudice. You can put some pressure on them through legal means to restrain their natural instincts. But this is not as easy as it sounds: you must win over not just the legislators but the enforcement bureaus and the courts--currently all strongly sexist just like the rest of society, with strong prejudices about women's proper place and the sort of woman who would register a legal complaint that she was discriminated against.

Moreover, even if there existed no prejudice at all on the part of employers, many women still would not want to work. They have been too well taught that their place is in the home; that marriage is the only honorable career for a woman; that it's a nasty world out there, one only a man's stronger constitution could stand up against; that it is unethical for them to go to work and take a job away from a breadwinner; that a woman's "competing" with her husband by going to work is castrating to him (ruining their sex life no doubt), that working women are unfeminine and unattractive; that her children will become juvenile delinquents if she doesn't stay with them all day; that if she loves her husband and wants a good marriage she will devote herself to his needs, physical and emotional, making herself and the house she runs a cozy refuge for him.

Change the social condition of women, and you undermine the attitudes not just of the employers but of the legislators and the judges too, and of the women who are afraid to take the jobs lest they fail as women. If women have the right to be equally legitimate autonomous human beings, not subservient to men in social situations or in the family, then their right to job equality is clear. As long, on the other hand, as women take a secondary and complementary role socially and in the family, there will always be a certain logic to discriminating against them in the working world.

Dana Densmore

May 1969

"In our culture men are unsexed by failure, women by success."

Margaret Mead

## EARTH-MOTHER

An increasingly detailed study of human societies brings out evidence of the female's enslavement to her biological function of reproduction. In ancient (or contemporary) matrilineal societies a child's descent is determined through its mother. The father is considered less important as an individual than the totality of the clan of which the mother is a part. The rearing of a male child is entrusted to the mother's brother (the child's uncle). The activities of the males are different from those of the females; even in those few societies where men take care of little children, a woman is first defined by her role as breeder. It was important throughout history that she bear as many new persons as possible, since so few survived infancy.

The female's intimate relationship with natural processes of life, while restricting her mobility, benefited her when the male had very little control over nature. But his mobility, the freedom of his activities from internal processes of pregnancy, even at that early time gave him a basis for his intellectual and technical advance - a scientific progress which would only in secondary ways lighten the labor of females for the species. It is with this knowledge in mind that the questions of birth control and abortion should be considered. The word female refers to the fruit or egg-producing members of a species. At first female people were thought to mysteriously contain the life force, and conversely, during menstruation and old age to produce degeneration and death in persons and crops. It seemed correct to put responsibility for fertility upon a woman. As individual men came to tame nature for their property, to distinguish themselves as masters and fathers from the continuing community of females, the power of the male seed was recognized as activating woman's passive womb. She was responsible now only for nourishing his life power; she was not able to decide when and under what conditions she was to do this work. In becoming the property of man within the family system, her status was degraded. Any demands she might have made to benefit as man did from his evolving individuality were retarded. Her dependence on his



cooperation in feeding the child became the basis of a system of male protection that institutionalized her physical weakness, emotional instability and sexual existence.

Woman was treated as if she were a field for growing crops. If she overproduced or became pregnant by incest or adultery, abortion was practiced on her as the most normal method of limiting bad effects to society. Primitive means for aborting for instance like extreme physical exertion, heat or irritants applied to the skin, or instruments inserted into the uterus invariably involved suffering and danger to the woman. Only when the fetus had "quickened" (moved in the womb) was it considered a living being and the operation termed illegal. The Christian church of the Middle Ages condemned abortion as murder, but since it accepted the theory that fetal growth developed in three stages (vegetable, animal, and rational), it tended to condemn only the abortion of rational beings. (This stage was established as beginning forty days from conception for a male child, ninety for a female.) Not until 1969 when science had made the discovery that a female egg existed in the womb before the sperm entered the woman did the Catholic Church declare all abortions criminal.

These facts make it clear that females have never had a direct part in discovering or defining their physical processes; or in the development of medical techniques that could give them more control over these processes. During the nineteenth century male doctors finally applied medical knowledge to women in childbirth. Male scientists and male doctors explained what she needed to eat, what was harmful to her. Male psychologists, male psychiatrists began to trace the causes and effects of her physiological makeup. Birth control devices were manufactured.

Today the choice offered to females is sexual activity with or without motherhood, but only certain classes of women are able to acquire or afford the contraceptive devices that for the first time in history give females release from expecting pregnancy. Poor women still add child after child to the masses. Birth control is seen as population control; the chemistry of the pill behaves like an anti-fertilizer in keeping the crop of the people to a predictable size. It is no

longer necessary that many children be born, in order that there be some to survive. But the decision to have children is imposed from above by the male hierarchy of science, education, and opinion which invariably blames her for her female condition - a condition she is trained to respond to with maternal behavior. No other satisfaction or individual existence is allowed her. Like women of all previous societies she is not distinguished from her sexuality. If she is poor, it is assumed that she reproduces the poverty that degrades her, that she is responsible for choosing to be helpless and insignificant; and yet it is clear that very few women, poor or rich, have access to the knowledge and techniques that would give them the control over their bodies that is basic to making a free decision about their role in society.

Hilary Langhorst

A woman is like a bag of dates; when full, she is useful in more ways than one, when empty she is of no further use and can be thrown away.

Middle Eastern proverb

A cradle consecrates the mother of the family, and more cradles sanctify and glorify her before her husband and children, before Church and home land. The mother who complains because a new child presses against her bosom seeking nourishment at her breast is foolish, ignorant of herself, and unhappy.

Pius XII

Address to Women of Catholic Action

26 October, 1941



## THE "PROTECTION" HOAX

Laws especially designed for the "protection" of women are, in reality, legally sanctioned forms of exploitation. The principle behind them is similar to the "separate but equal" hoax. The fact that employers and male employees invoke these laws in order to discriminate and exploit women is undeniably clear if one bothers to take a look at any of the pamphlets put out by the Women's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor. For instance, 11.2 million women were living in poverty as of 1966. Today 5.2 million families are headed by females; many of them work but cannot make enough to pull themselves and their families out of poverty.

Often when jobs are available in the community women aren't considered qualified to fill them. In the Department of Labor literature the occupations women hold are referred to as the least rewarding and the least rewarded. It was calculated that manufacturing companies realized profits of 5.4 billion in 1950 because they paid women less per year than the wages paid to men for similar work. The median income for a female headed family is \$4,450 a year. Why are women cheated so consistently in regard to the wages they receive and the jobs they are allowed to take?

Certainly the 'weight lifting' provisions for women and the state hour laws for women are contributing to her oppression. In the first place the fact that women and children are included together in the hours' laws infers that a woman has the status of a minor, is not quite mature enough to regulate her own hours but must abide the dictates of the male law makers for her own protection. She is limited to a maximum of 9 hours a day that she can work, and to 48 hours per week. Of course, this prohibits her from working overtime and making time-and-a-half or double-time pay which would surely be a boon with her meager wages. Instead, if she is piled up with work, she has to try and do it all in the hours allotted to her by law, while the over-time pay will go to some man who isn't hampered by restrictive legislation. How fortunate for employer and/or male employee!

The weight lifting provision is of the same oppressive restrictive nature. In every industry, un-

less she uses some kind of a device to carry the weight, a woman isn't allowed to lift more than 40 lbs. She is not allowed to push 75 lbs. or over. She can be fined up to \$50 if she does. Women are also barred from high paying construction jobs on the same grounds. In the foundries and the coal industries women aren't allowed to pick up more than 25 lbs. to carry. This contradicts the fact that many women pick up and carry around children who weigh as much or more than 40 lbs., lug groceries, and move furniture. Of course, all this is done in the home, so she is not depriving any man of a job or wages. Nobody would think of fining her or turning her jobs over to men. These restrictions are just one way of keeping women in the lowest paying jobs.

For example, 1.7 million women are employed as domestic workers at \$1,299 full time per year. 4.3 million women are employed as service workers, (cooks, waitresses, nurses, etc.) at \$2,815 full time a year. 1.9 million as sales workers at \$3,103 full time per year. The unemployment rate for women in 1967 was 5.2% compared with 3.1% for men. These obsolete laws are helping to contribute to the inferior status of women in the labor force.

Betsy Warrior

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward women, having in direct object the establishment of absolute tyranny over her...He has created a false public sentiment by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated, but deemed of little account in man. He has endeavored in every way that he could to destroy her confidence in her powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.

Declaration of Sentiments passed at the first  
Women's Rights Convention, Seneca Falls, N.Y., 1848



## SELF DEFENSE AND THE PRESERVATION OF FEMALES

Sexism will exist as long as males are able to use the threat of physical force against females. All males exercise this privilege of physical power regardless of the material reality of their own bodies, because it, like all other sexist privileges, is based on the lack of that privilege for the female. So, no matter how weak or strong a male is in comparison to other males, he is always stronger than a female. All male privileges are interpreted by sexist societies as being privileges for the female also. The privilege of self protection for all people does not exist, because it denies the necessary sexist relationship of strength over weakness. So, in order to maintain her weakness, the female is given the privilege of male protection. And this is extended in society so males become the protectors of all people - children and females.

But a contradiction arises between this image of the male as protector and the real experience of females. Part of the daily experience of all female people is some form of physical intimidation by males. Every female person knows the humiliation of being constantly harrassed and solicited by males. Having her person talked at, whistled at, yelled at, grunted at, hooted and howled at, visually dismembered or stared and winked at by males everywhere - on the street, at work, in school, at home - everywhere. Females suffer the humiliation of having parts of their bodies, the breasts, genitals or ass in most cases, grabbed, pinched, slapped, patted, poked and fondled on the street and in public places by male strangers against their will or desire. Females are terrorized by male exhibitionists. Are stoned and chased by male adolescents. Wives are repeatedly raped, beaten and brutalized by their husbands. Thousands of female children, adolescents and adults are attacked and forcibly raped by males in sexist societies, not to mention the rape of supposedly "consenting" females.

Every now and then in the rising and falling tensions of the contradictions between females and males, some one male takes upon himself the entire burden of a whole society's hatred of females. The

phenomenon of sexism reaches its logical outcome in the mass slayings, stabbings, rapings, beatings, dismemberments, disembowlements and stranglings of females. Bodies are found ripped apart, slashed to ribbons, tied up and laid out in degrading and humiliating postures representing the sickest fantasies of the sexist mind. The apologists for sexism dare not bring up the question of the miserableness of the relations between females and males in general. The individual males who engineer these mass purges against females do not come from a vacuum. They are the legitimate representatives of the sexist nature of the real world. Their actions speak for all males as the category of people who are the tormentors of females, the category of people who possess the power of life and death over females. They say that their superior physical strength and male protection is a privilege for females. But it is not. It is a means of exploitation and control of females. Male people are the enemy of female people and females must exercise self protection against their enemy.

The concept of self defense for females is derived from a strong Female Liberation consciousness which itself comes from a direct understanding of the twisted and degraded lives of females, from an overwhelming sense of helplessness and impotence - in other words, of being female. For centuries the contradiction between females and males has been developing, passing from one level to another, constantly changing but never destroying itself. For that to happen these eons of experience must be transformed into a concrete body of rational, conceptual knowledge which will then become a powerful weapon in the hands of females. This is our understanding of the process of change in all things and, in particular, of the oppression of females. The concept of self defense for females is part of this world outlook that recognizes that the basis of change lies in the material conditions of peoples' lives (being female) and that once those conditions are understood (become rational knowledge) people will necessarily do what is required for themselves to maintain existence. In other words, we do not think that women will choose to study self defense but that they will find them-



selves unable to choose not to.

Jeanne Lafferty and Evelyn Clark

By GOD. My hand will go through this brick.  
And with it will go weakness, and hand lotion,  
Pink dresses and the fear of catcalls.  
I kneel here, grimly reverent,  
As though at an altar of revolution  
Or doom.

Gail Murray  
April 1970

## VIOLENCE AND SELF-DEFENSE

Some women object to Tae Kwon Do (or any similar martial art) as self-defense because it is violent and to them violence is abhorrent. Such an attitude reflects certain conceptions of the nature of women and of the nature of violence which serve to maintain the oppression of females.

Traditional ideology places "Woman" on a pedestal. Females are seen as qualitatively different and better types of beings than males. Women are not supposed to be violent. Violence is brutalizing. Women are saved from this brutalization by being protected by men. Internalizing this view of themselves, many women reject the use of violence in self-defense because they fear becoming like men - who are scarred by the use of violence.

The fact is, however, that females are no better or worse than males. They belong to the same species. Furthermore, men have not done women any favor "protecting" them from having to be violent. It is women who are "scarred" by violence because they are its victims. As long as women try to maintain a supposed moral superiority and refuse to stoop to violence, as long as they depend on men to protect them, men's power to oppress them is maintained.

Women also object to violence for "moral" reasons. The pacifist notion of violence sees it as always absolutely wrong - no one has the right to be violent. Violence, however, cannot be considered as an abstract concept, divorced from material conditions. In reality, exploitative power relationships ultimately rest on violence. Hence, it is no accident that oppressed peoples have always been urged to be non-violent. Pacifism is simply ineffective against a violent oppressor. Liberation cannot be achieved until they come to understand that they are justified in using violence to free themselves.

Men's power over women is based on violence or the threat of violence because of superior physical strength. It is utterly unrealistic to think that violent attacks against women can be countered effectively in any "nice" way. A woman who refuses to risk hurting or killing an attacker is risking her



life. Women have to be convinced of their absolute right as human beings to defend themselves by whatever means necessary.

Pat Galligan

"Social scientists tell us that the sadist who stalks the woman and child is a sick man-although the question of why he should be permitted to communicate his perverted plague to the innocent has never been answered. But the most obvious thing about the rapist, sexual criminal, or child-assaulter is that he is a coward. He will not use his energies in the world of grown men, because a man can fight back. Since this type of criminal advances only into those areas of least resistance, it becomes urgent that every female in America prepare herself to offer swift, devastating resistance to this most disturbing category of crime.

...One cannot deal honestly with a thief or gently with a murderer. Power Karate places in a woman's hands that very power which enables her to deal with a potential killer on his own terms. The author does not believe in 'fitting the punishment to the crime.' Any man who would physically threaten a woman or child must be dealt with in the severest possible way. Otherwise what begins as a minor molestation may turn into a major attack. The practice of Power Karate for fifteen minutes a day, a few days a week, arms a woman with instant responses to contain any threat right on the spot.

...SHE MUST BEGIN PREPARATION NOW, TODAY, IMMEDIATELY, FOR BY TOMORROW MORNING THE DAMAGE MAY HAVE BEEN DONE, AND AN AVOIDABLE PERSONAL DISASTER ESTABLISHED AS AN IRREVOCABLE FACT."

Craig Lomack  
How to Protect Yourself with Karate

## USING SELF-DEFENSE

One question that is always asked in discussions about self-defense and at the Tae Kwon Do demonstrations we have given is "Have you ever had to use your training?" Using such training does not simply consist in defending yourself against a physical attack. The self-confidence that comes from knowing how to defend yourself often prevents a physical attack. Men attack women in the street because they can intimidate women easily. They fear no reprisal. Some of these men would not even approach a woman who seems self-confident.

If a man at first abuses you verbally, you can answer him, confront him instead of falling apart. In all likelihood he will back down. Being able to answer verbal abuse, which is often an end in itself rather than part of a more serious attack, means that you no longer have to suppress the indignation felt at obscene taunts, that self-destructive rage which builds up and is always directed inward because there is no way to let it out without risking more abuse.

Those of us who have studied Tae Kwon Do for some time have come to realize that we use our training constantly. We cannot consider learning a martial art simply as a means of self-defense in the street. Most women are not very strong; they require help (usually from stronger men) to lift heavy objects. They often tire easily from physical exertion. The strength and endurance we have developed already through systematic physical training has made us much more competent to deal with everyday activities.

We are beginning to realize that the psychological consequences of developing a strong body are tremendous. The female body is supposed to be a beautiful object. Women often internalize this attitude and view their own bodies as things to be looked at rather than used, decorated rather than developed. The body is separated from the self in a schizoid way rather than being felt as an integral part of the self.

The self-body split which women often experience presents the material world as something alien to the self, something uncontrollable. Self-confidence depends upon an integrated self-body. The growth of the self as whole and autonomous depends largely upon



a sense of oneself as a competent physical being in a material world that can be understood, a world in which we can actualize our potential. The development of a strong useful body is central to self realization.

Pat Galligan

To my astonishment, I found that women, in spite of knock-knees and the fact that for centuries a respectable woman's leg had not even been mentionable, could at a pinch outrun the average London bobby. Their aim with a little practice became good enough to land ripe vegetables in ministerial eyes, their wits sharp enough to keep Scotland Yard running around in circles and looking very silly. Their capacity for impromptu organization, for secrecy and loyalty, their iconoclastic disregard for class and established order were a revelation to all concerned, but especially themselves ...The day that, with a straight left to the jaw, I sent a fair-sized CID officer into the orchestra pit of the theatre where we were holding one of our belligerent meetings, was the day of my own coming of age... For two years of wild and sometimes dangerous adventure, I worked and fought alongside vigorous, happy, well-adjusted women who laughed instead of tittering, who walked freely instead of teetering, who could outfast Ghandi and come out with a grin and a jest. I slept on hard floors between elderly duchesses, stout cooks, and young shopgirls. We were often tired, hurt and frightened. But we were content as we had never been. We shared a joy of life that we had never known.

Ida Alexa Ross Wylie

## ON HEALTH

Women have been denied good health. Their bodies have been made into pitifully weak representations of the human body. Women have been made into weak dependent beings. Having no physical strength of their own to rely on, they must depend on men for the simplest of things. Females are denied physical competence. Because they are not even fit to do ordinary things, it is a chore to walk any distance, climb stairs, stand up for any length of time, to do common daily physical activity. Is this obvious weakness innate? Are females inferior by their very nature?

Anatomy books show many differences between the male and female body. Besides primary and secondary sex characteristics, many things such as fatty deposits, the thigh slanting inward, sloping shoulders, saddlebags, thin necks, small waistline are shown. The books are basically correct. This is a true description of how women appear today. But the books do not explain why women look this way, how they got to be this way, why they stay this way. They do not say that one's shoulders will slope if one has no muscles to give them form, that one would have a tiny waist if one has no abdominal and lower back muscles. Women's necks are barely strong enough to hold up their heads. The physical growth of females has been stunted. Their human potential has been denied them. When females have been denied the opportunity to develop strength, when they are taught that their weakness is their strength, when their soft, muscleless bodies are displayed as beautiful, how can one expect that females would have developed strong, healthy human bodies.

It is no accident that male bodies are called builds and female bodies are figures. Male bodies are useful, powerful. The female body is something only to be looked at, a sketchy outline of the human body. This can be seen most clearly by examining the clothing ascribed to women, the image they are supposed to represent. Skirts, sleeveless and neckless tops expose legs, arms, shoulders, necks. They are displaying their very weakness as beautiful. They segment the body into portions to be looked at. Women's bodies are for looks only. They are something to be dis-



played, not to be used. Men's bodies aren't broken down into pieces like that. Their legs aren't seen as legs, but as part of their whole body - a useful coordinated whole.

But this myth can be destroyed. Females can shrug off their shackles of weakness and have healthy competent bodies. Look at female athletes - swimmers, track people - those privileged healthy few. They do not have sloping shoulders, pinched waists, saddlebags. On the contrary, they have good healthy builds. Many of us have personally observed this change in the female body. We have been studying Tae Kwon Do (Korean karate) for several months. When many of us began we were quite overweight, couldn't bear to stand up for any length of time (even a subway trip), found walking hard. Slowly we can see and feel our bodies change. After hard practice, dumbbells, situps, and good eating habits, we can see muscle replacing fat. Our bodies look and feel different. They look more like what is thought of as the male body. We no longer have bulging saddlebags, big hips, and a distorted waist. We now see that the so-called "feminine body" is a myth, that there is no real basis for the differences in the male and female bodies. Except for the genitals and secondary sex characteristics, all else is contrived. The real difference is in lack of muscle.

A whole scheme of ideas, conditions, expectations--oppression--has evolved around the biological, anatomical differences between male and female. It is now believed that females are weaker than men, that there must be a division between the things that men can do and those that women can do. This belief will continue to be perpetuated until we stop it. It must be crushed at its root. Females must change the basic condition that keeps them enslaved. Females as a group must become healthy, strong, and physically competent. Young females must begin learning and training now so that they may never be impotent. All females must learn how to take care of themselves. We must learn self-defense to protect ourselves against the other sex which seeks to keep us "in our place", dependent, something less than human.

Delpfine Welch  
April, 1970

## ON THE PRODUCTION OF WOMEN

Once we have grasped the nature of our oppression, it is not enough to talk about it. We must concretely change aspects of our social existence in everyday life. The categories this society gives us to work with are "woman" and "man". It is quite obvious that we are female human beings, and that in negating and throwing off that oppression which is "woman" (the cultural "sphere of being" encaging females), we must create our own form of existence. "Man" is not the appropriate alternative. Through our appearance, action and collective behavior we must actively produce a counter-sexuality.

As long as a female is a woman or girl--wears feminine clothes, long hair, make-up, jewelry--in spite of all her rationalizations she continues to produce herself as a woman in this society's particular mode of production. Consciousness depends not only on strictly economic position, but on the material conditions surrounding the social person we produce--how we dress, talk and act. To change consciousness, one must change these conditions.

Wearing comfortable clothing such as pants and sturdy shoes is not only a matter of convenience, though, of course it is a pre-requisite of freedom in daily life to wear clothing that is functional, sturdy, and that provides freedom of movement. Our embodied self-definition, psychologically, socially and practically, is also intimately bound up with the type of clothes one wears and the significance attached to them. One thus learns to handle and coordinate one's body in specific ways as a sexed person, becoming conscious in specific ways of different areas of the body.

Perhaps the most striking way skirts are related to this, for example, is in producing a consciousness of legs. In a skirt legs are exposed--they are to be seen. That becomes their primary significance. In pants, on the other hand, legs aren't thought of as "legs" per se. They are that part of the body that is used for walking, running, or kicking. Rather than being lifted from the whole active body to be viewed (and in skirts, you exercise no control over this) and



treated as objects, they are intimately bound up with the subject's own movement and activity. Just look at the way people place their legs in sitting on the subway--and what gets stared at. Skirts clearly limit your position. One stands differently in pants. One walks differently.

Arms and breasts--in "blouses" the purpose of the clothing is to create the illusion of, or draw attention to, a peculiarly feminine figure. In more functional jerseys or shirts, arms become part of an active, self-controlled and used body. Or take our faces--the very addition of make-up is referred to as "putting on your face"--a face that must flirt and smile, be a certain type of mask. Hair, like clothing and stance, is defined according to sex. It is usually displayed by women as hair, when it is deliberately curled or long. And if one is dressed sensibly, in pants, it remains the most obvious identifying mark of being a woman.

What does it mean to dismember our physical-based personality this way into masks, images, fragments at the request of a generalized male other? The very resistance women feel to giving up these things--skirts, make-up, long hair--is a good indication of how deeply imbedded these "trivia" are in the almost moral compulsion to produce an image, an acceptable sexual identity.

One of the important aspects of these sorts of changes is that it enables us to negate a specifically feminine type of competition. Dressing plainly, wearing short hair, is not primarily apeing males, but is an attempt to do away with the trap of image-producing, the activity in terms of which women have created their alienated identity since childhood. Individually, the person is split into the "I" who organizes and creates the self as commodity in response to demand, the image, and what I imagine the response to be in the one who looks on and evaluates, the beholder that I allow to create me, in turn, as an object. Socially, it is impossible to have any base for a community with other females as long as one is vying for the attention of males. The feminine image enters into competition with other women producing images.

We judge other women then in a continual sizing-up process--not even in terms of how we are toward each other, but in terms of how this or that self-presentation does in market-place of female objectification, what a "good-looking woman" is, defined by the generalized male beholder.

When for so long our goals and gratification have been defined as succeeding in this twisted image-producing, approval-inducing, morally and physically crippling behavior, changes force us to ask the question "Who am I if I am not a 'girl'?" And they free us to begin to answer who we want to be as free female human beings.

Barbara Deck  
April, 1970

Food is breath, clothing a protection,  
Gold an ornament, cattle lead to marriage.  
A wife is a comrade, a daughter a misery  
And a son a light in the highest heaven.

exerpt from one of the Rig-Veda Brahmanas

"Insecure men are made nervous by successful women. These men need women's weakness to prove their own masculinity. When women are not submissive, there is a male "backlash"."

Martin Gruberg  
Women in American Politics



FRIDAY NIGHT STUDY GROUP EXCERPTS: April 3, 1970

Nancy: The more women are getting together and getting themselves together the more men feel threatened. Three different men I know that don't know each other and who have some degree of consciousness about the women's movement... they all know for example, that I'm learning karate and they know other women who are and each one of them has told me within the last month or so that he is thinking of learning karate! None of them has ever been interested in this before and they really feel threatened. "Yes, women should know it" but all of a sudden it's hitting them that suddenly the woman is going to actually have more physical power than he is. They're going to have to learn karate and be better at it.

Janet: Do they talk about it honestly or do they say that it's just as dangerous for them to be on the street as a woman?

Nancy: No, none of them see it as a reaction to women's liberation.

Holly: They say that they're learning it merely as a defense against "police repression"!

Janet: Yeah, or the rising crime rate!

Nancy: They say "It's something I've been wanting to do for a long time. It sounds great."

Holly: Uh huh, "Now that I think about it...It's really necessary for me."

Nancy: I work part-time as a waitress and the chef is German and very authoritarian. He knows how I feel about women's liberation but he pulled me aside and said he really felt threatened by me. He didn't say it in those words but he said first, "What you need is a man" and second he said that I represent a very strong challenge to him. He verbalized it that way.

Holly: "To conquer you, a liberated woman!"

Nancy: Because here I am and someday even though I haven't met him yet, I'm going to meet my male match. This other man at work who is very strong physically and was in the Marine Corps in Vietnam seven years ago, who's done alot of street fighting used to tell me about his exploits and now that I've been learning karate his attitude toward me has suddenly changed.

Holly: Not so impressionable now that you have that knowledge, too, and have a greater necessity to use

it.

Nancy: It's a subtle change but he feels that whenever he says anything that's asserting his chauvinism, I counteract. It's a physical response. He's very wary all the time. In Fanshen the men would talk about how the women needed to be liberated yet they wouldn't let their wives go to the Women's Association meetings.

"We can't let our women get together." This relates to what was said earlier about the oppressor who turns his hostility, focuses on in-faction hostility. Women always have gripes about other women, gossip, etc. You're forced to fight against women who are with you. You're encouraged by the oppressor.

Holly: What it's important for us to recognize is that in-group fighting is often a result of fear against lashing out openly against men. That our hostility is suppressed and redirected against people of our own sex, against ourselves, our children or against other powerless groups of people. We adopt a submissive behavior when dealing with the very people that continue to humiliate us. One of the nearest things to an in-group attitude is often refusing to show special attention to men as we have continually done in the past. Relating to women and becoming secretive to men's eyes is really threatening. They don't know how to cope with women who enjoy being together and who act very differently than when they're with men. Two different ways of acting...

Janet: About withdrawing affection, I realize now how completely you're expected to give to them in order to have them talk to you. It's not enough to talk the way men talk with each other. You have to just lavish attention on them or else they just don't come around. Now that I don't manufacture something to say if I have nothing to say, they no longer pay attention. You're supposed to hang on their every word, ease the silence with a clever remark or another question about what they're doing.

Holly: I always felt the extreme tension of silence with men. The whole responsibility was on ME to ask HIM what he was thinking. What deep and important, powerful thought could be in his mind!

Nancy: Whereas it's perfectly natural to be with women and not say anything.



Holly: Yeah, but men feel as though something is going on behind their backs when women demand privacy of their own or begin to like each other, to prefer each other's company rather than theirs. This often leads to the statement, "The longer I live with them, the less I know them." What mysteries!

Holly: In the past few months I've had dreams about using karate on the streets. Striking out in degrading circumstances...

Janet: You DO dream and it's so related to what you're doing and thinking. This friend of mine at work who isn't taking it but hears me talking about it...SHE started dreaming! She had one dream where she wanted to know karate and she didn't. She told me that the other day and she thought, "Here's why I need it!"

Holly: Or daydreams...all of these reactions come from somewhere. They're real, they're real symptoms, real reactions against real fear.

Nancy: When I was younger I dreamt often about being chased, etc. Now the kinds of things that happen you have the power to deal with the situation. There is a conclusion to them, on some level, and you can, they do serve as release as well. They're not something that reinforces your helplessness. When I was younger, it was the SAME thing over and over, in different forms but the same helplessness.

Holly: I found that alot of fantasies I had were real - of terror of being followed, confrontation. Sometimes I was being followed, sometimes not, but my fear was real, and the situation was a potential situation of confrontation.

Janet: Now when I'm in my apartment alone I'm SURE of what my reaction would be. I KNOW I'd clobber the hell out of him! I find all sorts of things that bothered me but I never had any way of organizing them. Before, everything was pointless to think about because there was no way to deal with them. Now there is.

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Is it so hard to understand that emancipation, the right to full humanity, was important enough to generations of women, still alive or only recently dead, that some fought with their fists, and went to jail and even died for it?

Betty Friedan

The Feminine Mystique

## TWO LETTERS FOR WOMEN

### I.

I became more confident as I began to shape up as a woman (thanks to Richard). I trained myself to see how I looked to men, although I might have said then that it was to other people. It was quite a painful process because I realized how dowdy and ridiculous my clothes were, how clumsy I was. Desperately, I wanted to be appreciated in any way possible. Richard saw every effect of my external appearance and responded to certain kinds of behavior; clearly I ought to imitate what was important to him if I were to be significant. Even when I questioned some one thing, the way he noticed me was never doubted as essential to my being "beautiful". Other men repeated the sort of concern he had according to their own preferences of what was marvelous in a woman. Every new man required a readjustment of style, not of usage. It seemed as if I was drastically changed by new relationships with first Farman and then Kenneth, yet they wanted particular kinds of women, liked or loved me for the services I performed for them - services of admiration, attention, actual physical care, sexual availability, perception about aspects of life they could not allow themselves to consider (for instance, other people's feelings). These services did not change.

I remember that at this time when I was so absorbed with making an image that would appeal to a man, I put down other women. The sense of competition was degrading. The same behavior I practiced to be sexually desirable made it impossible for me to feel valuable apart from the effort to please. Mistrusting myself, I feared other women, who might possess more skill or more natural attributes. The nature of my experience as a child, isolated from other children and subject to the arbitrary power of adults to administer affection, turned me to the inward creation of an imaginary, personal and unique empire (ruled by me under a different name). This choice did not develop in me the outward qualities of perception and sympathy that are seen to radiate from a "mothering" woman. Instead I was inclined to accept myself passively as a sensual being. Not so much a woman



good in bed, a healthy handsome girl, but as an artistic object to be selected by a man of taste. A woman with peculiar habits, strange glances, a mystery that could suggest a painting or a novel. This magic I could create, I thought. I didn't rely on my face or figure to be sufficient attraction, or on being amusing and clever, or on good nature - peculiarity, uniqueness was the only method that seemed to suit a person with the name and history of Hilary.

All of these emerging thoughts and purposes revealed themselves in friendships I had with other women. I was continually jealous, envious of every little gain a man or woman made. It seemed as if I could go nowhere. Then when I began Art School some confidence appeared. There could be a career. Something could be done that was objectively measurable and did not imply a positive or negative judgment upon me. But this hope was not real. Art seemed to offer a way for me to extend who and what I was into an objective world. I hoped to define myself in an immense territory, that I had assumed did not belong to me, was forever closed to me as a person unfamiliar with techniques of controlling reality. There had been no evidence that I could control material conditions. Art School, it turned out, did not contradict this.

First of all I was female. My painting therefore was personal therapy before it was an objective statement of colors and forms ("artistic truth"). I did paint concentrating upon my own vision; everyone did. But my subjectivity was qualitatively not the same as the subjectivity of any one of the male painters. What I recognized, what was real to me within my experience, made no sense in confrontation with what they individually or taken all together as men described. At the time, I presented this fact to myself as the result of the way I lived compared to the way they as men were able to live. They removed themselves from friends, lovers, all people when human demands conflicted with Art. They were sure that even if they did not paint excellently yet, they could find out the truths that would enable them to forge ahead.

Even while I doubted every stroke I put down on a canvas and clung to mythology as the only recognizable outcome of my childhood, I did begin to be able

to talk about real situations. There was something in my head besides fancies and emotions. Females are continually made helpless by being fed cast-off ideas. They are made to believe that intuition, internal feelings can create events, but there is absolutely no science in this. They develop tools of manipulation, not of direct control. And then they are encouraged, as I was, to use their imagination to fill in all the blank spaces in their education; that imagination is good enough power for a woman's mind to operate on. She is cute and amusing, much the way a child is funny when it misinterprets reality on the basis of its faulty knowledge. A female does not need to discipline her mind, to try to be accurate or objective. This would lead her to understand how to master nature, instead of her remaining in a confused and terrifying limbo, always seeking male clarification.

I know you went about becoming yourself in a different way. Perhaps part of that lies in your Jewish background with its tradition of strong women in the family. I had some knowledge of such women from the southern upbringing of my mother. Although she rebelled against becoming enduring and sustaining, there was no pattern of strength that gave her freedom from needing a man to complete herself.

By going to New York University and then taking a solid job away from your family you had a base from which to begin building relationships with people that were not so obviously sexual. I can see better how this was possible (although difficult) for you, and how I had to do quite differently. Our desire was the same - to be close to people, to be important to them. I assumed my worth was to become concrete through sex. Because I concentrated on sexual relationships the contradictions between men and women grew clear; men only loved me when they could control me (or assumed they could win control of me) and this power they claimed always weakened and ridiculed my existence as an independent human being. Not that men are really independent of women; they need their services, their submission desperately; still they are able to remove their minds from any attachment to a female, to subordinate their dependency in ways that leave them free to give first attention to Reality, Nature (or whatever abstract you may term it) and only second



concern to other human beings.

We have done different things but our choices have been dictated within a female realm. What have been pointed out to us as strengths (intuition, sensitivity, for example) have kept us agreeable to an arrangement of power that defines, by reserving all initiative thought to male people, that females as a caste can never determine their own destiny.

## II.

Long before I heard that females as a caste were oppressed by males (SEXISM) I believed that "communism" was a more humane system than capitalism. My Christian grandparents were devoted to that idea. But, as a child, I had no understanding of the terms used. They were abstractions - as remote in time and significance from daily life as heaven and hell. Only it made more sense to talk about material things than about angels or miracles. I felt open to the use of the word "communism"; it could be good if it meant a change in the way things were. For it was clear that my life, other people's lives and almost everything I looked at were distorted and crazy. Inseparable from what was called beautiful was something horrifying. The joy/pain syndrome; the love/hate cycle. People would say: that is the way the world is. And suggest that I adjust and make the best of it; if I could only get to smiling and being confident, life would go along very well. I really thought there was something quite wrong in me that I could not enjoy life; a pleasure quickly made me miserable. I mistrusted the way things had to happen, myself for distrusting Reality, and everyone else for seeming to accept it.

In college, when many people start realizing that adult life is not what has been taught them as children in a family, I began to forget about how I dreamed of the world changing. All my energy went into becoming intelligent, attractive, able to function without being terrified of my helplessness - the helplessness that is the root of childhood. It was an intensely selfish period. I don't like reviewing it at all as it is quite humiliating to see how misinformed and misled I was about what I had to do to be a good ("desirable") human being.

When I began to learn about Female Liberation all this work was overthrown. In fact, I had more work to do to get rid of the destructive habits I had adopted: an obsession with dress, a gentle and fragile manner, artistic conversation and poses, long hair. All of this confused and retarded my thinking, distracting me from discovering what I really needed. For a long time I just tried to get all the bad conditioning clear, to see what could not remain the same as before. I kept doing some of the same things: going to school, trying to be intelligent by studying book after book, but not making sense of them. Finally I had to decide to stop being a student. Even then I couldn't explain why that had to happen. It was critical to learn and I was not sure how I could learn outside of school. I doubted if I had the strength to push myself out of daily lethargies. But to continue to take in information I could no longer use was ridiculous. The importance of knowing a specific subject or of writing an imaginative, original paper was not going to make me the respected person I had anticipated. I could be "important" (that was how I expressed my craving then) only if I could control myself; that control came not, as I used to believe, from imaginative thought expanded outward, but from an understanding of the material conditions shaping me.

Understanding myself as a female came to examining myself within the concrete situation of capitalist society and of knowing what were the conditions under which women had previously been forced to live. When all the struggle I had been going through for ten months culminated in this realization, it struck me, simultaneously, that this was the way Marxist thought was meant to be arrived at. It was necessary for me to know who I was and that was a concrete problem that could be best handled objectively, scientifically - not personally and emotionally as I had always done. No one told me this would happen. I just had to see my experience as a female apart from the way I had thought of myself as a "woman". Then, starting to read Marx and Engels and Mao, I found that their ideas were useful tools for going on further. My school education gave little information for this; it tended to keep my mind isolated from daily conditions. Perception and thought were divided and antagonistic;



the language taught me compartmentalized phenomena and turned me into a spectator, an individual, separate from history and from society. As an individual I was totally responsible for my fate and was immobilized by "free" choices. There was no way to decide what the society was responsible for in my degradation until every aspect of my life could be seen as part of a material context that permitted certain development while inhibiting other aspects of human growth.

What I want to stress is that only a small number of women in Women's Liberation, and almost none in Female Liberation, have had any sort of real training in political thinking, or in radical action. I was always alienated from and intimidated by groups doing work like that. I desperately wanted to change the way I was living and the behavior of the whole damned society, but this change had to be basic, so that every person would participate as a thinking being in this new society. As long as I was weak, incoherent, possessive and dominated there was no way I could come to a different and better sort of behavior. I would simply continue submitting to injustice, brutalization, continue committing self-destruction when not striking out at others still weaker and more oppressed. This awareness was at the root of my mistrust of movements, reforms, etc. It is clear that Female Liberation is a consciousness that requires that material conditions change: if females learn self-defense they are no longer weak and controllable. From these changes come further thought and a theory about the process by which ideas and practice have brought about real alteration in people (revolution). In my work I undertake to alter what has traditionally been woman's existence. From this comes respect for all female people, who are coming to or will be coming to fight for their human rights.

Hilary Langhorst

PEACE AND LOVE,  
THE REVOLUTION IS HERE.  
ALL SETTLE DOWN,  
AND HAVE NO FEAR.

Dawn Warrior





